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Hafa Adai!

Happy New Year!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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CUC increases fuel charge effective Jan. 1. PAGE 10 | Celebration options for New Year's Eve. PAGE 10

PERSON OF THE YEAR

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Young and inexperienced was how some of Ralph DLG Torres' critics described him. Eyebrows were raised when the late governor Eloy S. Inos chose him as his running mate in the 2014 general elections. Their opponents even likened the partnership to a sinking ship.

Just some of the issues that were hurled against the Inos-Torres ticket was the CNMI government's mounting debt with the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., unpaid land compensation, the lack of resources for the Department of Public Safety, and

See TORRES on Page 6

JON PEREZ

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and first lady Diann Torres spend some time with their children at their family house in Koblerville.

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

D'Elegance Café

D'Elegance Café's timeless façade as it prepares for the dinnertime rush.
ERWIN ENCINARES

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

Julieta Cunanan's arrival on Saipan in January 1985 became the start of one of Saipan's most successful Filipino restaurants—D'Elegance Cafe.

The Garapan landmark has withstood the highs and lows of the CNMI economy as it continues to serve Filipino cuisine not only to Filipinos craving for home cooking, but to residents and tourists as well

See D'ELEGANCE on Page 6

Arrivals up 25 pct. in November

Visitors arrivals to the Northern Mariana Islands catapulted 25 percent in November 2016 compared to November 2015.

According to the Marianas Visitors Authority, arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota registered 47,261 visitors in November 2016, compared to 37,870 visitors received in November 2015.

» Japan sees first increase since March 2013

Arrivals from Korea recorded its second consecutive month of 40-plus percent increase, jumping 47 percent to 24,764 visitors. This is due to an increase in the number of flights, including low-cost carrier Eastar's daily Incheon-Saipan flight and Asiana Airline's Incheon-Saipan daily charter flights both launched in

See ARRIVALS on Page 6

DelRosario's claims vs Hocog dismissed

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

» Judge rules Hocog's conduct covered by legislative immunity

The Superior Court has dismissed the claims against Lt. Gov. Victor B. Hocog in his personal and official capacities in connection with the lawsuit filed by former Department of Public Lands secretary John DelRosario for the transfer of $400,000 in government funds to operate cargo ship M/V *Luta*.

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NOTICE

There will be no issue of *Saipan Tribune* on Jan. 2, 2017.

Happy New Year!

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Dylann Roof says he won't work to spare his life in church massacre.
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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

TOP STORIES OF 2016

CW-1 crisis

Lack of manpower continues to hound the CNMI, just as the Commonwealth has been experiencing renewed economic growth, with Garapan bustling with construction activity and tourists loitering around shops and other restaurants that opened up shop.

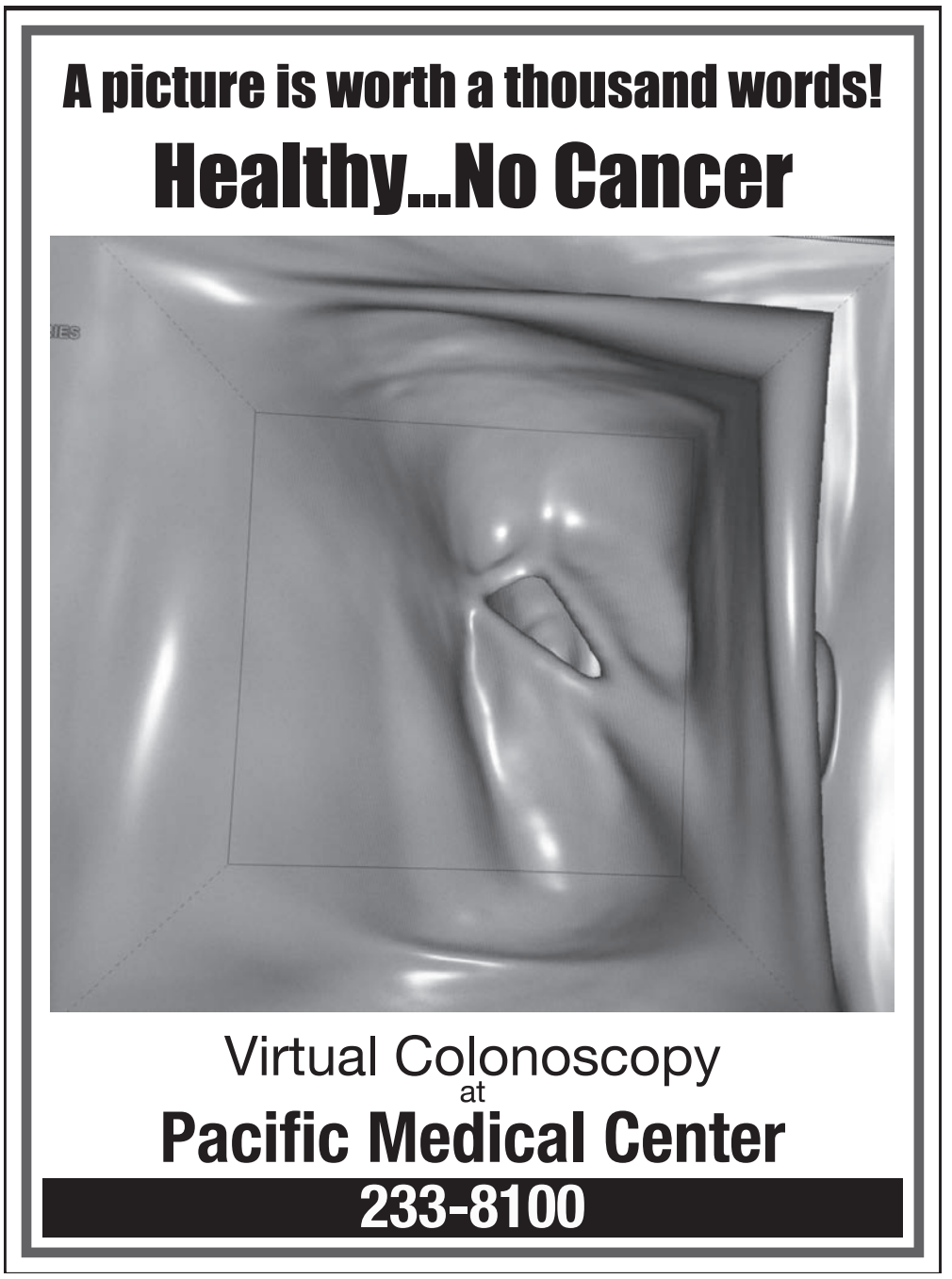
Hundreds of foreign workers had to leave the islands this year after being capped out, prompting businesses to either cut their working hours or temporarily close shop as they waited for the documents of their employees to be cleared by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

And with 2019 just two years away, the question remains what would happen to the CNMI once the CNMI-Only Transitional Non-Immigrant Working Visa program ends. CNMI officials had been pushing for an extension and an increase in the numerical limit as they say that there won't be enough workers to support the businesses that would open in the coming years. ***(Jon Perez)***

Tinian chosen for divert

Tinian would gain economically once the U.S. Air Force begins its operations of Tinian divert activities and other training exercises. The government made sure that no bombing activity would take

Continued on Next Page



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place during their negotiations with U.S. Department of Defense officials before agreeing to the proposed project.

The DoD and Air Force are finalizing their plans where officials, especially the Tinian leadership, are expecting the military would build additional infrastructure and help improve the airport for the benefit of the island's community. ***(Jon Perez)***

Skimming at ATM machines

Last April, many people panicked and withdrew their money from banks after several First Hawaiian Bank customers found out that their accounts have been "hacked" by unidentified defrauders.

Based on *Saipan Tribune*'s interview with some affected customers, the "network withdrawals" allegedly happened in Thailand, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and other countries.

FHB later issued a fraud alert for Saipan ATM card holders after the bank identified ATMs that were believed to have been involved in the skimming incident that resulted in unauthorized withdrawals. It was the first such incident to happen in the CMMI.

An FHB official said they were not "hacked"; it was an ATM skimming—a method by which defrauders steal card information with the use of technology or equipment, or skimmers, surreptitiously installed on ATMs.

FHB said they found the skimmers and removed them from their ATM machines. FHB then reissued ATM cards for affected customers.

A few days later, the Federal Bureau of Investigation released 10 photos of individuals wanted by the FBI for questioning in connection to the recent electronic thefts from First Hawaiian Bank accounts held by Saipan residents. As of yesterday, the FBI has yet to arrest the individuals in those photos. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Gun control law found unconstitutional

In a landmark decision in March, the CNMI's gun control law that prohibits residents from obtaining handguns for self-defense purposes was found unconstitutional.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona ruled that the ban on handguns and ammunition and their import— contained in the CNMI Weapons Control Act—are unconstitutional and in violation of the U.S. Constitution's 2nd Amendment.

The judge issued the ruling in the lawsuit filed by U.S. Navy veteran David J. Radich and his wife Li-Rong against then-Department of Public Safety commissioner James C. Deleon Guerrero and Finance Secretary Larrisa Larson.

In response, the CNMI government passed Public Law 19-42, which removes the ban on possession of handguns and establishes new rules for transporting and using firearms. Many of those provisions have since been found unconstitutional. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Casinos woes

Imperial Pacific International Holdings, the lone casino licensee on Saipan, was thrust into the spotlight after an article on Bloomberg claimed that the U.S. Department of the Treasury is looking into its casino operations. The article questioned the cash flow of the temporary training facility, saying that gambling tables are almost empty.

IPI denied Bloomberg's report and threatened to sue the international business news

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2017

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D'ELEGANCE

From Page 1

who have come to appreciate the amalgamation of Spanish, Chinese, and American food.

For its sheer longevity and for keeping itself relevant despite Saipan's changing food fads and its people's discriminating palates, D'Elegance Cafe is the *Saipan Tribune*'s Small Business of the Year.

Incorporated on Nov. 15, 1985, and having a grand opening on July 8, 1986, D'Elegance Cafe has been in operation for 31 years, with the primary objective of "making customers feel at home and treating them as family; accommodate everybody to the best that we can; and serve food with a reasonable price that is affordable to everybody," said officer-in-charge Emily Cabrera, who is Julieta's sister.

Julieta and her husband Wilson are natives of Pampanga, a province in central Luzon in the Philippines. The province is a hotbed of delicious Filipino cuisine and the Cunanans were able to transplant Pampanga's native dishes to Saipan and serve it at their restaurant.

The food and excellent customer service has become D'Elegance Café's calling card these past three decades.

"I think that is why customers keep on coming back," said Cabrera. "We concentrate on customer satisfaction a lot."

D'Elegance Cafe serves mainly Filipino food for the numerous *kababayans* that are homesick and are craving for home-cooked delicacies known as "Lutong Bahay" in the Philippines.

Cabrera shared that D'Elegance Cafe is now also making an effort to serve international food to encourage others to try out the place.

"We also target the Chamorros and the local people as well as Westerners, Chinese, and more," she said.

D'Elegance Cafe just recently hired cooks that specialize in many different cuisines to expand their menu.

Business moves

D'Elegance Cafe and Best Sunshine International, Ltd. recently entered into an agreement, in which the latter pays for employee meals at a discounted price.

"We gamble with that. There isn't much profit, since it depends on how many employees eat here," she said.

According to Cabrera, about 400 BSI employees eat at the restaurant per day, which she says used to be about 500.

D'Elegance Cafe has also recently extended their restaurant space, adding about six more tables in a room that used to be for guests that ask for catering services.

Cabrera said that the extension was done to further accommodate BSI employees and to look into the possibility of a regular catering service.

Cunanan is not only a business owner. Cunanan also used to be a teacher for the Public School System, teaching at Hopwood Junior High School for 28 years before retiring and later being re-employed at Mount Carmel School for two years.

Prior to her teaching profession, she also served as a waitress at a restaurant that has long shut down.

ARRIVALS

From Page 1

October 2016.

Also, Jeju Air launched regular four times-weekly flight service from Busan to Saipan on Dec. 15, 2016, and T'way made its inaugural flight to Saipan from Seoul on Dec. 23, 2016.

T'way is the fifth Korean carrier to operate daily Incheon-Saipan route flights. The new operational service launches are expected to attract more Korean tourists to visit and experience the Northern Marianas.

Arrivals from Japan increased 6 percent to 4,697 visitors in November, the first month of increase from the critical market since March 2013, when 18,210 Japanese visited the Northern Marianas.

The MVA has embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign aimed at revitalizing this once vibrant market. Negotiations are ongoing with Delta and other airlines to launch additional flights in 2017.

Media have started to list the MVA's new marketing tagline "Three-day Weekend in the Marianas," which increased load factor on Delta Air Lines' Narita-Saipan route. Also, there was a flight chartered by Shizuoka Prefecture government for the unveiling ceremony of a new Japanese monument in the Northern Marianas.

"November was a phenomenal month for the Northern Marianas in terms of visitor arrivals," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "Not only did we receive 25 percent more visitors than November 2015, but every single market increased, including Russia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.

"Most significantly, we saw the first turnaround in our major source market of Japan in over three years," said Concepcion. "The MVA will continue to explore new marketing opportunities in Japan to build upon this small step forward, such as our new 'Marianas-*chan*' (Marianas child) campaign that the MVA will be holding auditions for on Jan. 7. We welcome the community in helping us find that special child ages 4 to 6 who will be the fresh face of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota in Japan in 2017."

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

TORRES

From Page 1

lack of medical materials, as well as specialists and professional staff, for the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

Inos' health was also a concern. A number of people said that if Inos were to die, an inexperienced 30-something Torres would get the reins of the CNMI.

"Being an elected official—whether as governor, lieutenant governor, a member of the House or Senate, or a mayor—you are chosen by the people. Majority of the people believe and want you to govern them," Torres told *Saipan Tribune* in an hourlong interview for this yearend issue.

"Our community was more than willing to give us a chance to govern them. We were against the odds on how they campaigned against us. They made an issue of the governor's health, my age, and saying how inexperienced I am."

Yet despite all the talk, Torres ably held the fort whenever Inos was away, either for personal or health reasons, before completely taking over as the CNMI's chief executive officer that held the fate of more than 20,000 residents.

His supporters think he has done a good job, especially with how the economy is getting back to its feet. They believe he has stepped out of the shadows of his predecessor and mentor, and his four siblings. The CNMI economy continues to climb from many years of slump.

Based on the 2015 data compiled by U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Commonwealth's economy increased by 0.7 percent, from 2.8 percent in 2014 to 3.5 percent in 2015,marking the fourth straight year that the CNMI's gross domestic product increased following years of being at the negative level, including a negative 17.5 percent economic activity in 2009, the lowest for the Commonwealth.

Stepping out from the shadows

Torres said he doesn't see his inexperience as a disadvantage or liability. All politicians start from scratch before becoming veteran public servants, he said. "As I said in the past, everyone needs to be given the opportunity in order for that person to get the experience. Nobody is born a president or governor, you need to study and train yourself. Sure, I don't have the same experience that others have, but there's nothing in the [CNMI] Constitution that say about that requirement."

"The Constitution doesn't say how many years have you served or needed to serve. It doesn't say how many [college] degrees do you have or need to finish. Being 35 years old is one of the requirements. If you meet the criteria and win, that individual needs to step up and prove to the people that they can do the work in the office where they were elected."

Inos died in office in December 2015 in Seattle. Torres became governor with then-Senate president Victor B. Hocog being elevated to the lieutenant governor post.

Torres first ran and won as a representative of Precinct 1 in 2007. He became a member of the Senate in the 17th Legislature and became the youngest Senate president—at 33 years old—in the history of the CNMI during the 18th.

Benefits of economic turnaround

After almost a year of being captain of the ship of state, the CNMI is slowly reaping the fruits of changes and policies that he helped create while a member of the Legislature and the Executive Branch as Inos' deputy. He has also made a name for himself, getting out of the shadows of the late governor and his four siblings.

"We are seeing the economic gains. Our economy is getting better; we were able to pay for the first time land compensation where we don't need to float bonds. For the first time we can address all interest-bearing accounts," said Torres, who signed House Bill 19-212 last week that appropriated $9 million from the $40.9 million supplemental budget to settle land compensation claims and other judgments.

The government owes $83 million in land compensation and other judgments but Torres said the appropriated amount is a start in settling some of the administration's debt. "I wish I had $83 million to pay all obligations but we don't. We need to set guidelines on how to get paid and how we should pay these obligations across the board."

Increasing the salaries of government personnel has been one of the late governor's goals.

"Growing the economy is the only way for us to have a higher revenue for the government and pay those employees who did not get any salary increase for the past 15 years. We gave the current government employees the wage increase and we gave out bonuses for the retirees."

Addressing social issues like the war on "ice" would also continue after the Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation, and Community Guidance Center programs received an additional $1 million.

"All of these had been the vision of the late governor. When he passed away we made sure we [the current Lt. Gov. Hocog] continue his vision because that's what why we were voted for under the GOP."

Looking forward to 2017

Torres sees a more robust economy in the coming year, with several projects—including the Imperial Pacific Resort opening—and tourist arrivals going up. He said this would translate to higher revenues for the government.

"Our projection is that we will have a higher budget for next fiscal year," said Torres. "Another thing that I'm excited for next year is Docomo's [Pacific] ongoing fiber optic project."

"I'm just blessed with my political career. That's why there's no single day that I don't take advantage of it by doing what is best for the CNMI because of the vote of confidence given to me by the people. Why do I work hard to address the issues? I want to make sure the retirees get their pension and people's lives to get better."

"Our work is not yet done. We're going to push for better health care and address issues at the hospital and CUC. The Public School System just got an extra $10 million. Our next priority is to provide new equipment for the hospital and give doctors the support they need."

Deciding to run

Running for public office was not in Torres' playbook. All that changed after a few years when he returned to Saipan after graduating from Boise State in Idaho. He was talking to Dave Camacho, from the Pakpak family, at the back of his older brother Vic's truck after working the whole day at their family property in Sadog Tasi.

That was in 2006 and he was complaining about the current state of Saipan. He was talking about some changes that needed to be done and how some things should be done to improve the community. Camacho told him that he should run for the House of Representatives.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

DISMISSED

From Page 1

In a seven-page order on Wednesday, judge pro tempore Timothy H. Bellas determined that Hocog's conduct is covered by the constitutional doctrine of legislative immunity.

Bellas said dismissal of Hocog is appropriate as DelRosario cannot amend his complaint to circumvent the applicability of absolute legislative immunity.

The case against Hocog is dismissed with prejudice, which means DelRosario cannot re-file the case.

Bellas said DelRosario's complaint sets out allegations of acts that all took place while then-senator Hocog participated in legislative functions.

DelRosario asked the court to adopt tests, which require the court to analyze the substance and motives of legislative activities.

The judge declined to do so, pointing out that the test espoused by the CNMI Supreme Court is to analyze whether the alleged action(s) took place within the "legislative sphere." If so, the act is cloaked by legislative immunity.

"The court is compelled, by the authority cited, to find that the courts are not the proper venue to analyze the actions of legislators when they present, discuss, and/or vote on resolutions or perform other acts which are within the legislative sphere," Bellas said.

Here, Bellas noted, the alleged participation of Hocog in the drafting and adoption of Resolution 19-3 occurred in the "legislative sphere."

"To paraphrase the U.S. Supreme Court, if abuses occur within the legislature then it is the legislators and the voters that are the ultimate mechanisms for discouraging or correcting such abuses and not the courts," the judge said.

DelRosario filed the taxpayer's lawsuit against Hocog and Finance Secretary Larrisa Larson in May over the alleged adoption of a Rota Legislative Delegation Resolution 19-3 without public notice that purportedly authorized payment of $400,000 to Luta Mermaid LLC, a private company owned by Hocog's relatives.

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STORIES

From Page 3

agency. They also halted trading at the Hong Kong Stocks Exchange for one day in order to save the company's shares.

On Tinian, the $75-million fine slapped by the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network has kept investors away from taking over Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino. FinCEN found out last year that Dynasty owner, Hong Kong Entertainment (Overseas) Investors, failed to implement an anti-money laundering program that would have kept the company in compliance with the U.S. Bank Secrecy Act. ***(Jon Perez)***

Submerged lands transferred to CNMI

The official transfer of three out of 200 miles of submerged lands around the islands of Uracas, Maug, and Asuncion has been inching closer and closer to a conclusion

The memorandum of agreement that establishes certain terms and conditions of management of submerged lands was signed on Sept. 22, followed by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' signing of the patent of execution a few months later, on Dec. 22.

Torres thanks Washington Delegate Gregorio Kilili Sablan for pushing the bill through the federal government. ***(Erwin Encinares)***

Van Gils is NMI Teacher of the Year

Kagman High School's Gerard Van Gils was selected as the CNMI Teacher of the Year and is set to represent the CNMI later in 2017 along with other state Teachers of the Year across the country.

Popularly known as "Mr. G," Van Gils was elected out of 21 nominees representing public schools in the CNMI.

Van Gils said he owes it all to the college preparation program called "Million Dollar Scholars," which he and KHS principal Leila Staffler initiated. The goal of the college program is to raise $1 million in scholarship money to help students go to college. The program ended up raising $2.5 million and sent six KHS students to college. ***(Erwin Encinares)***

Arrest of former DPS commissioner, cop

Authorities arrested in April James C. Deleon Guerrero for allegedly sexually assaulting a then-15-year-old girl while he was DPS commissioner in 2013. His co-defendant, then-police officer Jesse S. Concepcion, was also arrested. The Attorney General's Investigation Division handled the case.

Both Deleon Guerrero and Concepcion allegedly admitted to an FBI special agent during interview that they had sex with the same girl.

Most of the charges against Deleon Guerrero and Concepcion have already been dismissed without prejudice as no probable cause were found. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

The arrest of M/V *Luta*

Japanese investor Takahisa Yamamoto is suing Lt. Gov. Victor Hocog and the owners/operators of Luta Mermaid LLC, that owns the M/V *Luta* for allegedly refusing to pay back the $3.4 million that he put up for the vessel. The U.S. Marshal Service seized the vessel. Two companies and crew members of M/V *Luta* have joined as intervenors in the lawsuit.

Yamamoto requested the court to sell M/V *Luta*. But Luta Mermaid LLC, M/V Luta, Luta Mermaid LLC president Abelina T. Mendiola, Deron T. Mendiola, and Fidel S. Mendiola III, through counsel William M. Fitzgerald, opposed the sale. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

GOP as supermajority

The CNMI conducted another smooth and orderly election last November, which saw the Republic Party candidates dominate the poll. GOPs grabbed 15 of 20 House seats and took two of three Senate seats.

The election was not without drama. Rota Municipal Council chair George Ogo Hocog (Rep) Hocog edged Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind) with just six votes, 378-372. Manglona, however, obtained 279 absentee ballots while Hocog got only 100 to clinch the victory, 651-478.

The absentee ballots generally did not affect the results of the earlier tabulation, showing the GOP candidates' domination of this year's election. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Ex-CUC employees sue board members

Two former employees of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. sue CUC board members in November for allegedly holding closed-door meetings under the guise of "executive sessions" and using their positions to obtain private financial gain for themselves and their relatives.

Former CUC public information officer Brad Ruszala and former CUC chief financial officer Matthew Yaquinto, through George Lloyd Hasselback, sued CUC board chair Adelina C. Roberto and board members Eric C. San Nicolas, Joseph T. Torres, Ignacio L. Perez, and Albert A. Taitano for violations of the Open Government Act, Government Ethics Code, and U.S. District for the NMI stipulated order. The case is pending in court. ***(Michael T. Santos)***

High court affirms trial court's orders in Atalig, Yana appeal

On Dec. 29, 2016, the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *In re Malite*, 2016 MP 20. The Supreme Court affirmed two trial court orders invalidating the contingent fee agreements entered between Antonio Atalig and four heirs of the Estate of Angel Malite and awarding Atalig and his colleague, Reynaldo O. Yana, $75,525 in attorney's fees.

In 2010, the Supreme Court affirmed a trial court's disgorgement order regarding attorney's fees that had been awarded to Atalig and Yana, but vacated an order denying all attorney's fees. The high court remanded the question of attorney's fees to the trial court with instructions to conduct a hearing on the validity of the contingent fee agreements. The high court directed the trial court that if it found those arrangements to be invalid, it should then consider the reasonableness of the attorney's fees proposed by Atalig and Yana pursuant to Rule 1.5 of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, and either grant that proposal or determine what the reasonable fees should be. On remand, the trial court invalidated the contingent fee agreements, found the attorney's fees $1,500,000 as proposed by Atalig and Yana excessive and unreliable, and reduced the award to $75,525.00.

» High court invalidates contingent fee agreements and awarding of attorney's fees

On appeal, Atalig and Yana argued the trial court lacked substantial evidence to invalidate the contingent fee agreement and the trial court's award of attorney's fees was unreasonable.

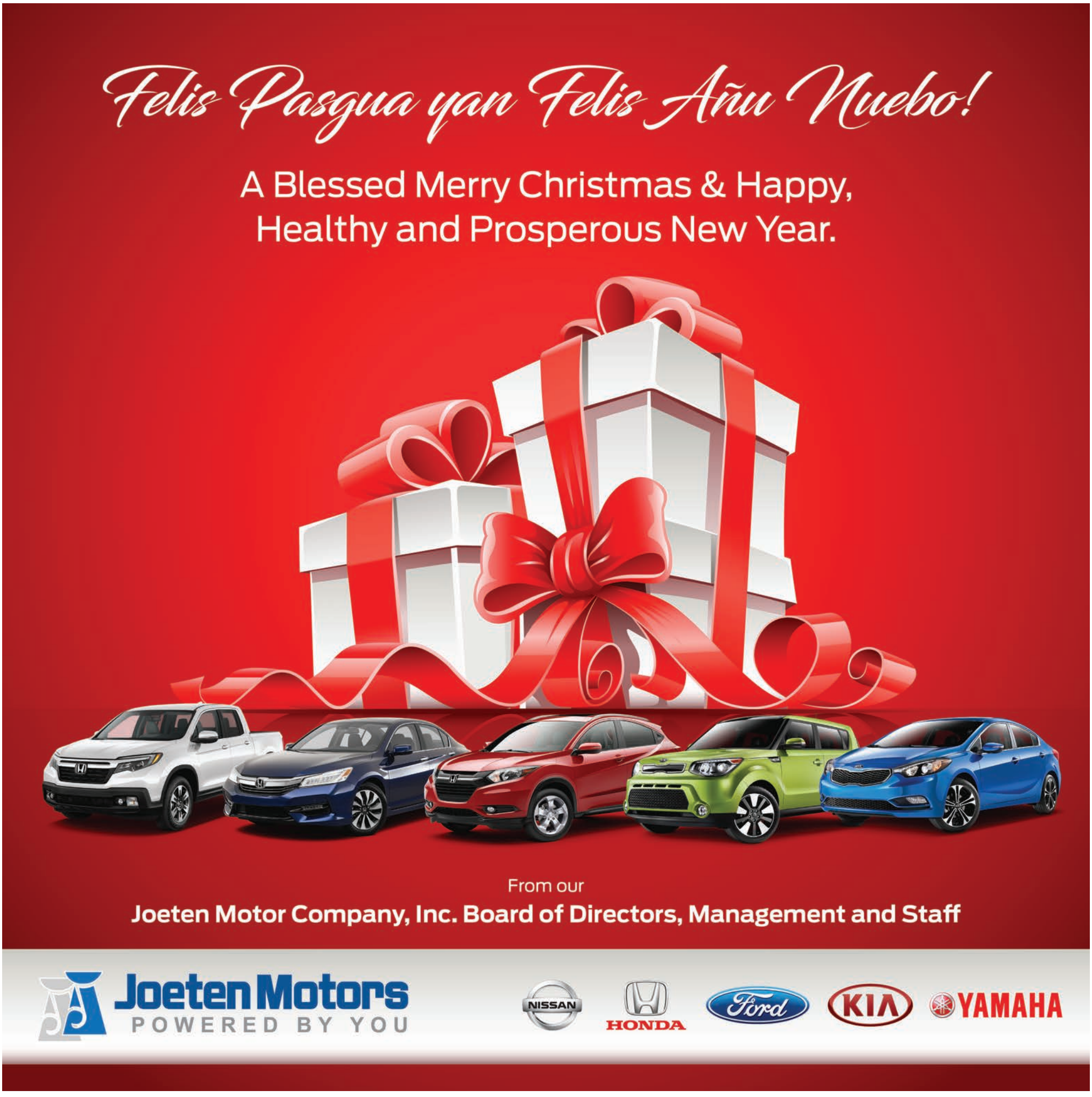
The Supreme Court found the trial court's decision invalidating the contingent fee agreements not clearly erroneous. The high court found that the trial court cited multiple points of evidence, both from Atalig's own testimony and in the form of reasonable inferences from circumstantial evidence, to conclude that Atalig and Yana were aware they bore minimal risk of non-payment and the contingent fee was unreasonably disproportionate to the work performed. The high court concluded that these findings sufficiently supported the trial court's decision invalidating the contingent agreements. Moreover, the high court noted that Atalig and Yana failed to offer evidence, other than their own testimony and time logs prepared after the fact, to refute this finding.

The high court then considered the award of reasonable fees. The high court found that because the trial court applied the Model Rules of Professional Conduct 1.5(a) factors and articulated the reasons for its findings, it could not say that the trial court abused its discretion in finding the requested fees unreasonable and instead crafting its own award.

The Supreme Court affirmed both the trial court's order invalidating the contingent fee agreements and the order reducing Atalig and Yana's claimed hours and subsequent award of $75,525.

The high court's full opinion is available at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme16.html.

For further information, contact the Supreme Court at 236-9800. ***(NMI Judiciary)***



CUC increases fuel charge effective Jan. 1, 2017

Effective Jan. 1, 2017, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. will increase its fuel adjustment charge from $0.14323 per kilowatt-hour to $0.15512 per kWh. This is.05 higher than what it previously was before its reduction back on Dec. 1 this year.

That means residential customers who use 500 kWh of power per month will pay about $5.94 more in their monthly billing.

Previously known as the Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause, the increase is mainly due to a rise in the average fuel prices.

The fuel adjustment charge, or FAC, is a change in cost of power to compensate for increases or decreases, usually unanticipated, in the price of energy. It serves as one of the two components that make up a CUC power bill. The second rate component is the electric base rate, which is used to fund operations, projects, and debt servicing.

CUC first instituted LEAC in 2009 to recover fuel and fuel related costs, a system also used in Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In May 2015, the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission authorized CUC to change the name of LEAC to FAC to provide customers a more accurate description of the rate.

CPUC granted CUC the ability to adjust the FAC rate based on the price of oil. Adjustments are made when the Mean of Platts Singapore monthly pricing equals or exceeds 4.5 percent of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the FAC rate.

CPUC conducts periodic reviews of CUC's fuel charges to ensure that consumers pay no more or less than the actual cost of fuel. Although there is a slight increase in the FAC rate, CNMI consumers have experienced a decline in the FAC since mid-2014.

MOPS is the average of a set of Singapore-based oil product price assessments published by Platts, a global energy, petrochemicals, metals and agriculture information provider. ***(Michael T. Santos)***

Celebration options for New Year's Eve

Unsure of where and how to send off 2016 with a bang? Thankfully, several hotels have the people covered with New Year's Eve specials of their own.

You can try your luck in Club 88's New Year's Eve drawing, with participants having a chance to play for free for a whole year. See Club 88 for more details.

Hyatt Regency Saipan is throwing a Grand New Year's Eve Dinner from 6pm to 9pm. Buffet includes free premium wine, sparkling wine, beer, iced tea, and soft drinks at $80 per person, $60 per Club at the Hyatt member, and $40 per child 6-12. The beachfront countdown will be from 10pm to 1:30am and offers champagne and fireworks display, along with a raffle drawing every hour.

Mariana Resort and Spa is also hosting their own countdown party from 9pm to 12am. Dinner buffet with an open bar is up for grabs at $50 per adult, $25 for children 4-11. Local discount brings down the cost to $40 per adult and $20 per children 4-11. Entertainment will be available all night with fireworks at 12am.

Club C wants the public to start the New Year with extra money in their pockets, thanks to their raffle giveaway from 8:30pm until midnight. Prizes start from $250 up to $900 and raffle drawings are every half-hour. Play maximum bets on the Hotshots for a chance to win the jackpot of $12,660.

Pacific Islands Club Saipan offers a huge buffet with all the cocktails you can drink for $130 per person. Locals get a 20-percent discount with the option of solely having cocktails for $70 per adult and $15 for children. A special entertainment will be available throughout the night and fireworks will be on display at midnight.

Grandvrio Resort Saipan is holding a barbecue dinner buffet for $39 per head, $35 for locals. The Tropicana will offer a seafood dinner buffet for $35 per head, $25 for locals. Entertainment will be ongoing throughout the night and fireworks are expected 12am.

Aqua Resort Club's New Year's Eve Gala Dinner Buffet goes for $42 per adult and $20 for children 6-11. The party starts at 9pm and ends at midnight; no entrance fee required. The New Year offers entertainment throughout the evening as well as fireworks at the end.

With a countdown party of its own, Kensington offers free champagne and other beverages from 10:30pm to 1am. Raffle prizes will also be available on site for the duration of the event.

Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan has its New Year's Eve Special of seafood and roast beef dinner buffet with free red and white wine along with American beer or soda. The dinner goes from 6pm to 9:30pm and costs $60 per adult and $30 per child 4-11. Their dinner show is also available from 6pm to 1am and offers free wine, American beer and juice for $90 per adult and $45 for children 4-11. Cocktail party will only be at 10pm at $50 per adult or child. ***(Michael T. Santos)***

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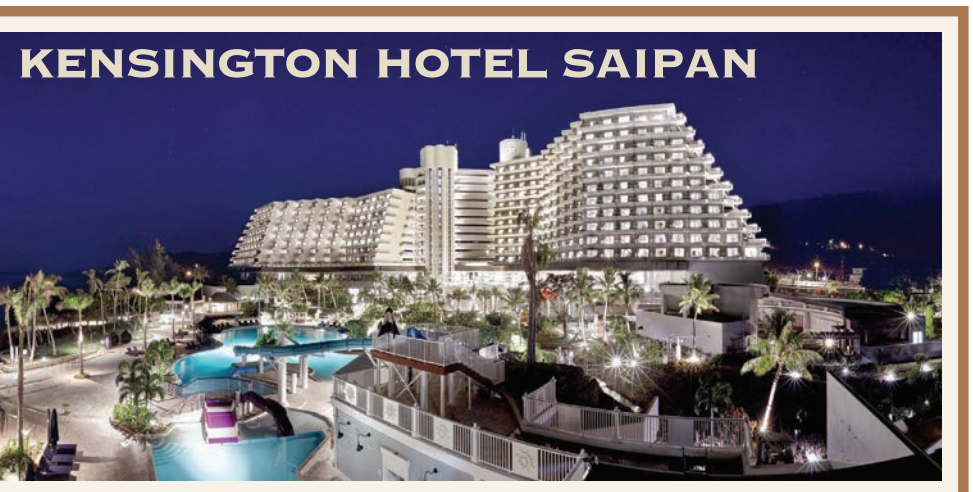

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

MVA to host 'Marianas-*chan*' auditions

The Marianas Visitors Authority will hold open auditions on Jan. 7, 2017, on Saipan for "Marianas-*chan*" (Marianas child) to help promote the Northern Mariana Islands in Japan. The contest is open to U.S. citizen children ages 4-6 who reside in the CNMI. Additional details and applications are available at www.mymarianas.com, and the deadline to apply is extended to 12pm, Jan. 6, 2017. Interested contestants from Tinian and Rota are invited to submit an application with a 1-2 minute video of the contestant to info@mymarianas.com for call back to the audition. For more information, contact the MVA at 664-3200/01. ***(MVA)***

Advocacy to be expanded in 2017

Another successful Glow Walk, Run or Wheel event hosted by the Voices of the CNMI Tinian Chapter and Team Koka. Voices of the CNMI is a self-advocacy group for individuals with disabilities and Team Koka is a non-profit organization focusing on muscular dystrophy awareness. Next year, 2017, both organizations will put in motion plans to make the community on Tinian accessible to all and to ensure that people with disabilities are recognized and acknowledged, as well as, being in the workforce. For information on Voices, contact Jan Barcinas or Monika Diaz and for Team Koka, contact Mikaela Diaz or Patricia Aguon. ***(PR)***

CUC schedule on Dec. 30

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that its offices will be closed on Friday, Dec. 30, 2016, 12pm, in observance of New Year's Day. However, the Customer Center will be open for purchasing of tokens, payment slips and reconnections until 5pm. For emergencies, contact the CUC Call Center at 664-4282 (4CUC). ***(PR)***

Mobil Kagman reopens

The Kagman Mobil service station re-opened on Dec. 19, 2016, after the completion of upgrading works. Kagman Mobil was previously closed for a planned forecourt canopy upgrade that started on Nov. 13, 2016. ***(Mobil)***

Saipan sobriety checkpoints

The Department of Public Safety's Traffic Section will be conducting sobriety checkpoints on Saipan otomorrow, Dec. 31, 2016, on Beach Road, Garapan to Beach Road, Chalan Kanoa, from 6pm to 8pm,and along Chalan Pale Arnold, Garapan to Chalan Pale Arnold, Chalan Lau Lau, from 10pm to 12am. Checkpoints will be terminated when it rains. Traffic and patrol officers will be actively conducting speed enforcement, aggressive driving interdiction program and will be conducting highway criminal interdiction. ***(DPS)***

Tinian sobriety checkpoints

Tinian's Traffic Section will be conducting sobriety checkpoints today, Dec. 30, 2016, along the west- and eastbound lanes of Grand Street between JJ Mart and Department of Commerce, from 6:30pm to 7:45pm, and along the west and eastbound lane on Canal Street between Queen's and Tinian Hardware, from 8pm to 9:15pm. Each checkpoint will last at least 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes). ***(DPS)***

NMPASI closed today

The Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc., or NMPASI, will be closed today, Dec. 30, 2016, at 12pm for Professional Development training. It will reopen on Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2017, for normal business hours: 8am-5pm. ***(PR)***

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House kills bill increasing excise tax on betel nut

JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives on Wednesday defeated a bill that would have increased the excise tax on imported betel nut after failing to get the needed three-fourths vote to pass it.

Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan) introduced House Bill 19-72 to increase the excise tax in importing areca nut (betel nut) into the CNMI.

Thirteen members voted yes, three voted no, and one decided not to cast his vote. Reps. Anthony T. Benavente (Ind-Saipan), Francis S. Taimanao (Ind-Saipan), and Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan) were absent.

The Senate made amendments on HB 19-72 to increase the excise tax from 2.5 percent to 7.5 percent. That was why House Speaker Rafael S. Demapan (R-Saipan), vice speaker Joseph P. Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan), and minority leader George N. Camacho (R-Saipan) chose not to support the measure. They said the increase was too much.

"I honestly felt that it should go through the committee for further review but the Legislature now is in a lame duck session and any bill that requires appropriation or related to government operations requires a three-fourths vote," said Demapan. "We see a huge difference in the increase. The bill's intent is good. No doubt that we should control and impose additional tax but it was just too high. Sometimes timing is a factor and I believe the bill would be re-introduced in the 20th Legislature."

Camacho said the increase would have an adverse effect on stores that sell betel nut. "There are some who are already saying that they won't sell any more [betel nut] if the excise tax increases to $5 per lb," said Camacho.

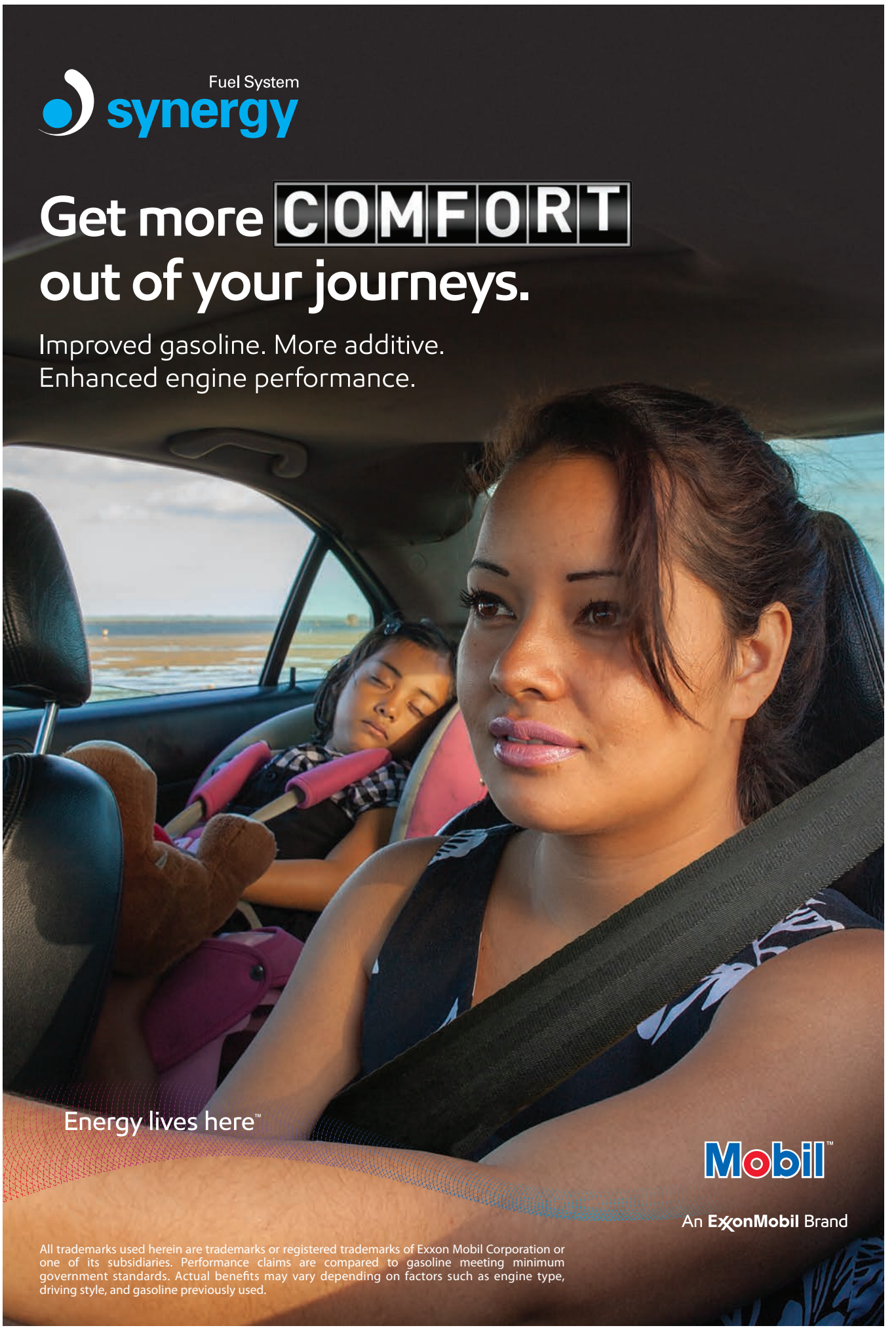
Last September, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres signed into law a separate bill, HB 19-65 authored by Rep. Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan), that prohibits the sale, offer, or giving of betel nut to minors (under 18).

Other bills

The House also passed several other bills while deciding to send some to their respective committees for further review.

HB 19-22 (to establish a new public highway on Tinian), HB 19-85 (to prohibit smoking in vehicles in the presence of minors), HB 19-110 (mandating Customs to have K-9 units), HB 19-118 (to include lime in Pure Food and Drug Control), HB 19-141 (ID card requirements), HB 19-153 (to prohibit taking and selling of certain sizes of fish species), HB 19-155 (to establish a patient medical referral office), HB 19-189 (to empower the Commonwealth Ports Authority to grant concessions), and HB 19-211 (funding for family violence prevention) all passed the House.

HB 19-23 (minimum wage increase), HB 19-52 (to include the Northern Marianas College and Northern Marianas Trades Institute as recipients of the business gross revenue tax), HB 19-71 (requiring public schools to prepare a fiscal year budget), HB 19-103 (waiving contractual obligations of educational assistance recipients), and HB 19-109 (penalty for repeat offenders) were sent back to the committees on Ways and Means, Education, and Judiciary and Governmental Operations, respectively.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'Marianas-*chan*' application deadline extended to Jan. 6

The Marianas Visitors Authority's "Marianas-*chan*" (Marianas child) application deadline has been extended until 12pm, Jan. 6, 2017.

The purpose of the extension is to allow more time to reach age-eligible children who are now out of school due to the holiday break, according to MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion.

Applicants must be 4-6 years old, reside in the Northern Mariana Islands and be a U.S. citizen. Interested contestants from Tinian and Rota are invited to submit an application with a 1-2 minute video of the contestant to info@mymarianas.com for call back to the Jan. 7, 2016, audition on Saipan. Contestants will have the opportunity to demonstrate any special talent or skill at the live auditions. "Marianas-*chan*" will be featured in various MVA marketing and promotional activities in Japan in 2017, beginning in February. In addition to the $1,000 cash prize, travel expenses and a stipend will be provided to "Marianas-*chan*" and their parent or guardian for promotional activities held in Japan and the NMI.

Applications are available at www.mymarianas.com. ***(MVA)***

Finance remits $7M for CHCC utility obligations

Just a few weeks after the signing of House Bill 19-212 into Public Law 19-75 by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres to make supplemental appropriations for the operations and activities of the government for fiscal year 2017, the Department of Finance remitted yesterday $7 million to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. to assist in the hospital's ability to pay its past due and outstanding balance to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. and allow for the steady improvement of utility service and infrastructure for the hospital's longevity.

According to Finance Secretary Larrisa Larson, CHCC immediately remitted this funding to CUC.

"This funding will address a longstanding issue of past due utility bills owed by CHCC to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. This appropriation was a joint effort of the Torres-Hocog administration, the Legislature, CHCC, and CUC and is one of the many steps taken by all parties involved to address longstanding issues and debt that has accumulated from prior administrations," Larson said.

Torres said the funding will benefit Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

"As the economy improves from the new investments and from the greater enforcement of our CNMI laws and regulations, we look forward to addressing and resolving even more of the longstanding issues and improving our financial picture for future generations to come," Torres said.

CHCC CEO Esther Muña expressed her appreciation for the funding yesterday and noted CUC's collaboration and prioritization of hospital services over the years.

"We appreciate the assistance of the Legislature, Gov. Torres, and CUC for helping us and prioritizing the hospital. It is absolutely appreciated that the legislature and Gov. Torres have provided funding for this. Every time we reduce our liabilities, we can focus on improving our services at the hospital," Muña said, adding that another $11 million in obligations are left to pay.

CUC executive director Gary Camacho reiterated that the funding will assist CUC in improving its services and infrastructure.

"It has been a productive working relationship and everyone in the community will benefit from this. It is wonderful that this administration is proactive in addressing these arrears and it goes to show how critical these services are to the community. They were true to their word and we greatly appreciate it. This is truly a testament of everyone understanding that the operation of the hospital and utilities are essential," he said. ***(PR)***

CHCC CEO Esther Muna expresses her gratitude to the Legislature, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, and CUC before handing off $7 million to CUC executive director Gary Camacho and board members during a short meeting yesterday.

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Happy birthday shoutout to our baby girl, Alexis Marie. Happy 2nd birthday sweetie! Love, from Mommy, Daddy, Jadine, and Damon.

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

UN credibility depends on keeping its forces clean

The United Nations' primary weapon is credibility—global recognition that it stands for peace, humanitarianism and the protection of innocents. That is why the world body must take steps to ensure that its blue-helmeted peacekeepers, sent into trouble spots around the globe, have clean records. The U.S., a key financier of U.N. peacekeeping operations, should push for an improved recruitment process that weeds out the bad apples before they're deployed and have the opportunity to make a country's bad situation worse.

The U.N. has struggled to keep pace with the need for peacekeepers—about 100,000 from various nations are deployed in 16 hotspots—and its screening process has lagged, too. That sometimes has led to the deployment of thugs, including three men with checkered histories who were recruited from Burundi for service in the Central African Republic.

About 13,000 peacekeepers and other U.N. personnel have been authorized for work in the CAR, beset for years with internal strife, because of the world body's concern about "extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, sexual violence against women and children, rape" and other offenses in recent years. The last thing the CAR needed was more people predisposed to human-rights abuses, but the U.N. sent in the three Burundians, part of a contingent of several hundred peacekeepers from that country, which has drawn U.N. scrutiny for its own human-rights record.

According to The Washington Post, one operated a Burundian military jail accused of human-rights abuses, a second was tied to a crackdown on government critics and a third had publicly defended the army's reputed abuses. When the U.N. learned about the trio's backgrounds, it sent them home.

In recent years, the U.N. has faced a growing clamor over sexual abuse and other crimes perpetrated by its officers. A better screening process could identify not only those with bad records but also those with a potential for going astray.

The U.N. claims it lacks the resources to screen every prospective peacekeeper or even access each one's records. But if it expects impoverished, war-torn countries such as the CAR to get its act together, the U.N. must be capable of improvement itself. Its credibility is on the line.

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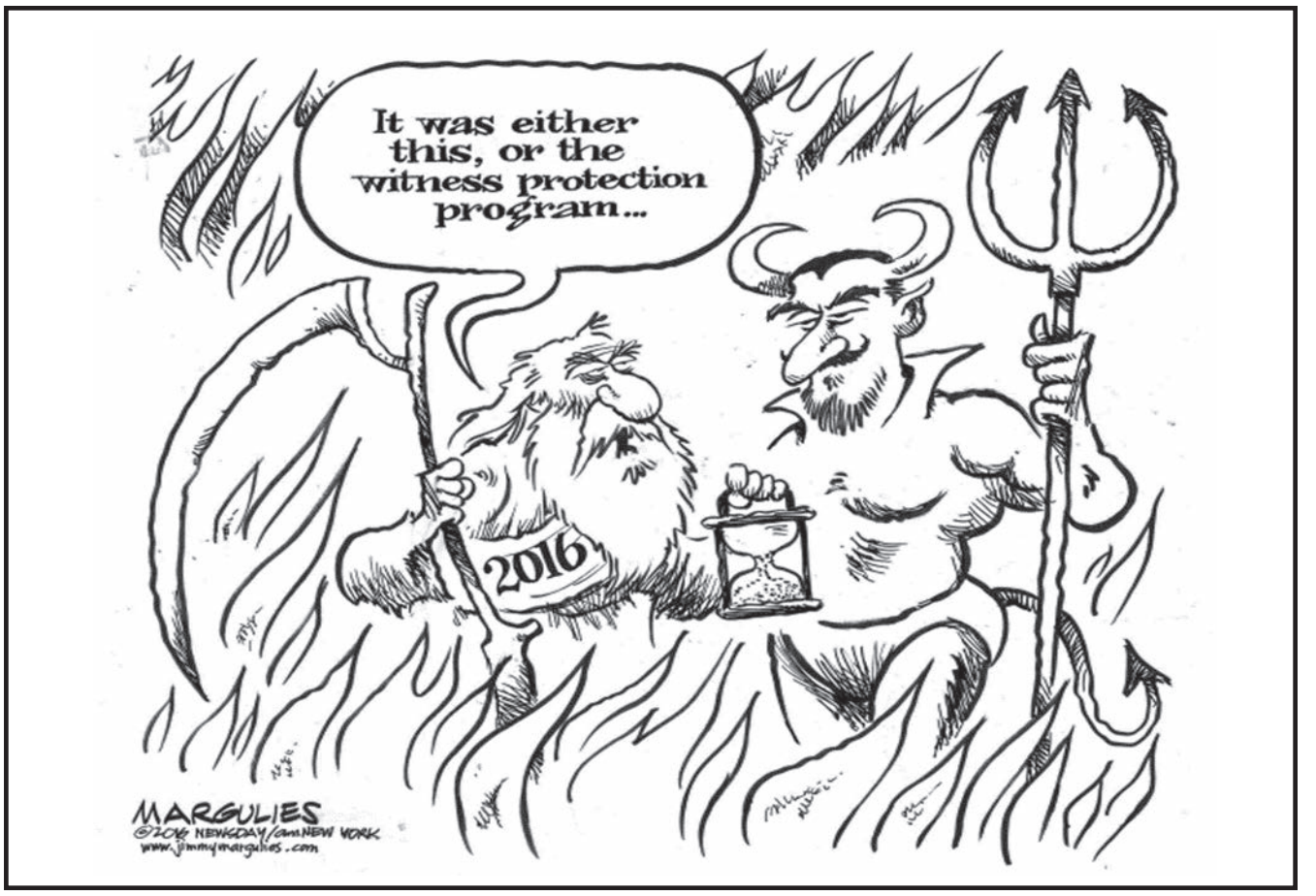


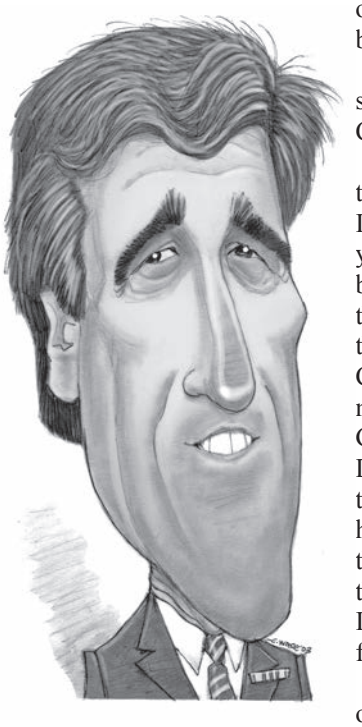
Kerry's belated speech and bottom-line lesson

By MARTIN SCHRAM
Tribune News Service

Martin Schram, an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service*, is a veteran Washington journalist, author and TV documentary executive. Readers may send him email at martin.schram@gmail.com.*

Secretary of State John Kerry, down to just 23 more days on our payroll, spent 70 precious minutes Wednesday fervently telling the world, via live TV and internet stream, all that's gone wrong between Israel and the Palestinians, plus a few familiar ideas to fix it. But mainly, he defended, quite desperately, last week's U.S. decision to silently abstain and allow the United Nations Security Council to condemn, by a 14-0 vote, Israel's increasing construction of settlements.

And as Kerry spoke, it all seemed like precisely the sort of leadership lecture we should have been watching on YouTube, as an old rerun. Because it was the sort of speech that would have made great leadership sense if only Kerry had given it several years ago. Or better yet, if only President Barack Obama, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who was once thought to be specializing in Middle East peacemaking, had given it years ago. Back then, after all, all the world thought the two-state solution was on the verge of being possible. Except hostilities always seemed to explode anew. Every time.



But of course, no old speech could have explained away the U.S. decision that shocked the Security Council chamber—when U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power abstained rather than veto the resolution that condemned Israel, as America had often done in the past. So Kerry tried his best, saying, "(W)e could not, in good conscience, stand in the way of a resolution at the United Nations that makes clear that both sides must act now to preserve the possibility of peace."

But frankly, what team Obama needed to better handle that decision was a form of message politics inoculation—something to at least minimize the dramatic shock value of the decision to abstain rather than veto the resolution. They needed to jettison their old-school, quiet diplomacy and play their cards face-up, making their concerns public. They needed to emphasize no resolution can be voted on if it is one-sided. A measure must condemn Palestinian violence and deaths inflicted upon Israeli civilians and also condemn Israeli settlements.

Also: To fully inoculate the news corps and diplomatic corps, team Obama needed to brief reporters and diplomats in advance to remind them that an abstention didn't mean they'd be backstabbing their ally, Israel. Because:

—In 1985, President Ronald Reagan's administration abstained on a resolution criticizing an Israeli air attack on the Tunisia offices of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

—In 1986, Reagan's diplomats abstained again on Security Council measure deploring the shooting of civilians at the West Bank's Birzeit University.

—And on Dec. 23, 1987—29 years before last week's vote—the Reagan administration abstained on a Security Council vote of 14-0 deploring Israel's conduct during disturbances in the occupied territories.

That might have lessened the newsbreak shock value that followed last week's Security Council vote.

But frankly, I would have vetoed the resolution and prevented any vote at all—not because I think Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government deserves a kind favor, but because I understand the wider consequences that will be felt because of that 14-0 vote. On this I agree with the position explained on CNN Wednesday by the widely respected former Middle East trouble-shooting negotiator George Mitchell, who's also a former Senate Democratic Leader. He said he thinks that, in the name of keeping a prospect for peace alive, he would have recommended a veto because this unanimous outcome will isolate Israel from the rest of the world. And even more important: It will probably drive Israel and the Palestinians further apart than ever.

Of all the facts Kerry fired at us Wednesday, one of the most troubling was "the proliferation of settler outposts" that seek to apply Israeli domestic laws, instead of Israeli military law, in their occupied territory—"a major step towards annexation." He quoted one of its advocates as proclaiming this was a step toward forging Israeli "sovereignty in Judea and Samaria"—the Biblical names for the land.

And that leads us to our ultimate bottom line: We can ask people to forsake a policy. We can even ask people to forsake an ideology. But we cannot ask people to forsake their theology.

That is the dilemma even Israel's wisest minds may never overcome.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Seven random crumbs for 2016

By ED STEPHENS
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Visit Ed Stephens Jr. at EdStephensJr.com. All views expressed by the author are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and stance of the Saipan Tribune.

I have, as usual, enjoyed a holiday season of over-indulgence: too much travel, too much spending, and too much eating. So, as a matter of tidying up, I might as well gather up a few random crumbs so I can figure out where the year went. Here are seven items:

1) One hallmark of the year was the tourism-oriented construction and the visitor activity on Saipan. Next year, of course, promises to be an eventful one on the tourism front. Guam, meanwhile, is topping its records for tourism arrivals. The year 2016 isn't over yet, of course, but in 2015 of every four visitors to the Mariana islands, three went to Guam. Anyway, stay tuned: Tourism is going to be a lively topic next year.

2) On May 6 in this space, I noted that of the 1,000 Gates Millennium Scholars selected nationwide for the year, 11 of them were from the CNMI. Gates Millennium scholarships provide very generous college funding. Just as I was chilling our champagne in preparation for New Year's Eve, I got an email from one of the CNMI's 2016 Gates Millennium Scholars. This particular scholar reported earning a 4.0 grade point average for the first college term. It's nice to see a good story getting even better, so I'll offer a toast to all of our Gates Millennium Scholars.

3) As the annual routine of holiday catching-up propagated through my circle of friends, I noticed a trend that has continued for a long time now: The ones who are doing the best are either self-employed professionals or are business owners. The line between those two realms is, admittedly, a little bit blurry. But what I remember clearly is that when I left college the corporate realm was considered the primary option for employment. Now, at least among the people I know, it's not.

4) Here's an update to my Nov. 11 column, "Old man and the MP3," in which I lamented the loss of my SanDisk Clip Sport MP3 player. I am now happy to report that the replacements I ordered are working as well as the original one.

Since everything I like gets discontinued, I was surprised that this model has remained on the market at all. After all, it's not something flashy and trendy. It just does its job with inconspicuous competence.

Now that I'm back up and running in the audio department, I'll note that one of life's great pleasures is listening to recordings of old-time radio shows. My favorite series is "Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar," which aired between 1949 and 1962. Heck, I wasn't even born back then, but, thankfully, the audio has lived on.

5) When it comes to old-time pleasures, there's nothing more distinguished than Scotch whisky. Me, I don't like anything stronger than beer. But I'm apparently the exception, and 2016 was the year by which everybody I know has been won over by Scotch.

You might envision a Scotch aficionado as a paunchy, red-faced old gent who wears Harris Tweed jackets. But even my wife, who is 100 percent Filipina, has become a single-malt snob.

I ordered a book on Scotch just so I can feign enthusiasm when everybody else is talking about it. I intend to share this information with you next year just in case you need it. And then, after you bamboozle the Scotch drinkers well enough to keep them at bay, you and I can retire to our beach chairs for some cold brews and pretzels.

6) Speaking of books, in August, author Tom Wolfe released another book, this one titled *The Kingdom of Speech*, which is about human speech and evolution. I don't know if I'll get around to reading it, but I was happy to see that Mr. Wolfe, who is 85, is still behind the keyboard.

Wolfe's first book, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, came out in 1965. My pals and I discovered Wolfe in the 1970s, mostly via our parents' bookshelves. Wolfe was a big influence on many aspiring writers, as was his contemporary, Hunter S. Thompson, who passed away in 2005.

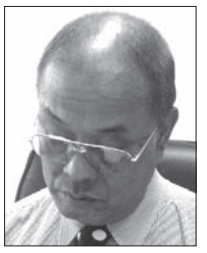
7) Just to keep myself occupied as the New Year settles in, I've decided to dedicate a computer as a desktop flight simulator. I just bought the computer, a refurbished Lenovo with Windows 7. Thus far I think I can take a basic cut at this project for under $350. I can already see a lot of temptations to improve things, all of which would come at a price, of course. Anyway, first things first; I'm still awaiting the arrival of the software I'll be using. The software is called X-Plane 10. If the project works reasonably well and for a reasonable cost, I might report on it next year.

So, with an eye toward 2017, I'll await the popping of the corks. Then I'll offer a few polite toasts, pour the bubbly stuff into the sink when nobody's watching, and get myself a doggone beer. You did bring the pretzels, right?

Eh, we're filthy rich!

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands. All views expressed by the author are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and stance of the* Saipan Tribune.



With less than a day and-a-half in the receding year, we peep with mixed reactions as the dawn of 2017 prepares to light up this verdant strand.

The adage the "past indicates the future" is something to expound upon as we look ahead. What are your expectations? Are you optimistic that we would see better days ahead, more of the same, or a hybrid of both?

How do we dispose of the usual irrational despondency fueled by the well-nurtured poker syndrome and *mañana*? What a mind-numbing recipe as we prepare for 2017!

U.S. taxpayers must do something about the 43 million fellow citizens drowning in the swamp of abject poverty. It's time to spend your taxes where it counts.

Start by cutting your misguided compassion fostering permanent welfare state of the NMI with tons of your tax dollars. You have and still are paying for food stamps (SNAP), health insurance (Medicaid), housing vouchers, social security and school lunch program, among others. You are generously sending your hard-earned taxes to the NMI.

Dr. Cesar Chelala, a New York writer and international public health consultant, fittingly quoted U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." Nonetheless, we're filthy rich so leave us alone!

Fatal handouts: Meanwhile, I've been slammed that it isn't their fault that our people have relied on freebies. Said a recipient, "The elected officials placed us here through negligence." I understand where he's coming from but I can't fathom the collective failure of the "do-nothing" on the hill, allowing abject poverty to be ingrained as a way of life.

With a reported casino income of $3.9 billion monthly, we have more than sufficient funds to meet *all* our needs. This assertion should hold true if we tax this largesse. But someone just whispered, "Not yet, already!" Oh?

Hopelessness: How comforting the waning days of Obama for he would soon be complete history! Can't stand his insidious plans that fostered a divisive country now mired in despair, not to mention his global apology tour. He insidiously reduced the strength of our country as a global power.

He impugned use of executive fiat, violating the concept of separation of powers between the three separate but equal branches of government. For instance, he unilaterally funded a certain aspect of his signature healthcare program shot down by the federal court. It told Obama that appropriation is solely the authority of the U.S. House of Representatives.

His wife Michelle went off on a tangent that her hubby leaves behind "hope." Nah! The hope is in his departure from the WH. *No mas*! There would have been credibility in her spout had she and Barack sent their kids to a poorly funded public school system. But they sent them to an elite school to avoid the heavy traffic of kids who hail from homes drowning in poverty!

New wall: The shutter of capital flight—huge sums of money leaving China—has adversely affected casino industries in the Asia-Pacific region. It has derailed real estate investments in Australia and Canada. China further limited how much money could be withdrawn from ATM machines from outside China to crack down on corruption. The regional binge for casinos heightens competition in every corner.

The external wall of investments closing-in in stealth ways plus internal arrogance inflicted against other key investors shutter any hope of progressive strides on economic growth. The assessment by a global economic firm isn't very encouraging in terms of future investments here. The Trump-Jinping relationship isn't helping any either.

We elbowed Nippon investments in recent past, ignoring their pioneering efforts. Japan has turned its market into a fading sunset for the CNMI. It has headed to the Aloha State, exploring every island outside of Oahu. And we've basically done the same with South Korea. Is the NMI now teeming with investments it could afford boasting arrogance?

Across the Pacific Divide national Republicans are determined to cut through entitlement programs to pay up the more than $20 trillion in federal deficit. Trump is too busy working on wealth and jobs creation for ailing businesses and blue-collar workers across the country. Where do we fit in this equation?

Excuse me! Puerto Rico would be completely bankrupt or broke by February of 2017! Aren't we following closely behind? "Not yet, already?"

What's the NMI's credit rating like today? It's about assessing revenue generation versus the ability to pay off debts. Is it an "A" or below junk bond status?

Networking: Both political parties here have participated in national conventions. It is in fact the perfect venue establishing and nurturing what's known as "networking."

It simply means connecting with the powers that be so that when the NMI is caught in a bind on an issue before Congress, we could seek help from both sides of the aisle to get a measure through.

If the occasion is done with simple photo-ops then we've lost out on a vital opportunity to make the best expanding friendship whose help we may need down the stretch.

Ooops! As we part, it is rumored that Da Boysis are being questioned by the feds one by one. Happy New Year! Go ahead and recite the kids' riddle, "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great…"

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Remembering Eloy

On Dec. 28, 2016, we commemorated the first death anniversary of our former governor, Eloy S. Inos. In remembrance of his untimely passing, members of the Democratic Party community joins his children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters and other family members in conveying our solemn prayer for the repose of the soul of their beloved father, grandfather and brother.

While the late governor was a lifetime member of the Republican Party and a political challenger, we Democrats acknowledge not his party affiliation but him as a person. His good-humored gentleness, his astute manipulation of facts and artful presentation of figures, his affableness and statesmanship earns our respect.

The late governor's ascension to the highest political office in our government came at a very tumultuous history in our self-government, a critical time when even members of his own political party were desperate for a leader who could stabilize the adverse political shenanigans engulfing the Commonwealth.

Governor Inos, through his personal character, was successful in establishing emergency programs designed to stabilize the economy and convinced our citizens to give him, not his party, the trust and confidence to lead us forward.

In memory of his untimely passing and while we join the family in extending our prayers for his eternal rest, he left us behind only able to imagine the possibilities of what would have been like if he is still alive.

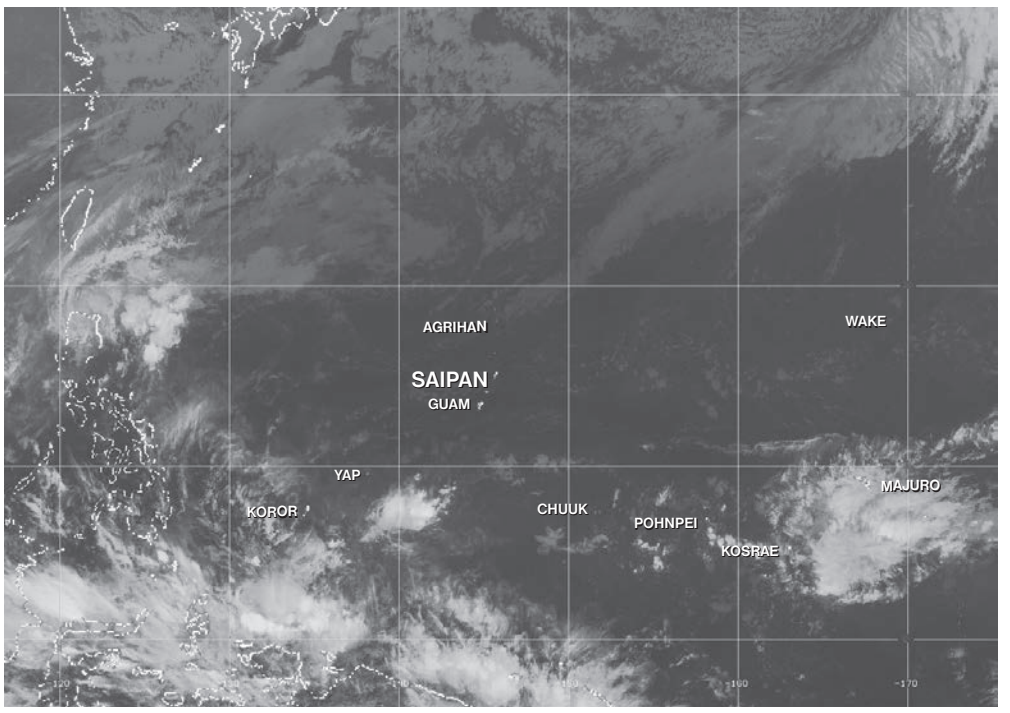
Daniel O. Quitugua
Chairman, Democratic Party

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:30 AM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2016
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate to fresh trade winds, partly cloudy skies and a few showers prevail across the Marianas this morning. Latest buoy readings show seas between 6 and 8 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▼ ▲
Guam and Rota	Morning clouds	79 / 87 °F
Palau	Thunderstorms	78 / 86 °F
Yap	Partly cloudy	80 / 84 °F
Chuuk	Partly cloudy	80 / 86 °F
Pohnpei	Mostly cloudy	76 / 84 °F
Kosrae	Partly sunny	80 / 85 °F
Majuro	Morning clouds	81 / 84 °F

AROUND THE GLOBE		▼ ▲
Auckland	Morning clouds	56 / 73 °F
Beijing	High level clouds	10 / 33 °F
Hong Kong	Morning clouds	54 / 67 °F
Honolulu	Partly sunny	69 / 73 °F
London	Sunny	32 / 45 °F
Los Angeles	Light rain	55 / 63 °F
Manila	Morning clouds	78 / 89 °F
Melbourne	Mostly cloudy	69 / 83 °F
Miami	Morning clouds	63 / 71 °F
New York	Increasing cloudiness	33 / 40 °F
Osaka	Partly cloudy	34 / 48 °F
Paris	Sunny	27 / 39 °F
Pusan	Sunny	33 / 41 °F
Rome	High level clouds	30 / 49 °F
Salem	Overcast	33 / 44 °F
San Francisco	Partly sunny	46 / 58 °F
Seoul	High level clouds	10 / 34 °F
Tokyo	Partly cloudy	33 / 50 °F
Washington, DC	Partly cloudy	33 / 40 °F

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		
2:21 AM	LOW TIDE	-0.31 Feet
9:16 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.89 Feet
2:50 PM	LOW TIDE	1.14 Feet
7:38 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.86 Feet

	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	5:57 PM
Sunday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Monday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Tuesday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM

	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	7:08 AM	6:49 PM	-
Saturday	7:57 AM	7:41 PM	-
Sunday	8:44 AM	8:33 PM	-
Monday	9:30 AM	9:26 PM	-
Tuesday	10:14 AM	10:19 PM	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 5, 2016

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA6394	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA6392	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA6391	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA6390	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA6398	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA6396	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA6391	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA6391	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:00pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:20am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3403	4:45am	8:30am	Daily
LJ652	2:10pm	6:05pm	Daily
7C3401	4:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:20am	11:05am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	11:05am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6394/191	4:15am	8:55am	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	9:15am	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
PR1572	5:45am	7:45am	7, 4
UA6391/183	1:30pm	8:50pm	5 via Rota-GUM
UA6391/183	1:30pm	9:10pm	1, 4, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA6391/193	1:30pm	10:35pm	5 via Rota-GUM-ROR
UA6390/183	2:20pm	8:50pm	2 via GUM
UA6390/183	2:20pm	9:10pm	3, 6 via GUM
UA6390/193	2:20pm	10:35pm	2 via GUM-ROR

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	2:00am	5:00am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:20am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6391/159	1:30pm	9:55pm	1, 5 via Rota-GUM
UA6390/159	2:20pm	9:55pm	3, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA6393	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA6395	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA6391	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA6390	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA6397	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA6399	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA6390	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA6390	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:30am	3:05pm	Daily

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

LJ651	7:30am	1:10pm	Daily
7C3402	9:30am	3:00pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ625	8:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:05pm	1:55am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:40pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA190/6397	9:55am	5:35pm	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR1571	10:25pm	4:45am+1	3, 6
UA192/6395	9:45pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via ROR-GUM
PR110/UA6395	10:05pm	8:05am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/6395	10:25pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/6395	11:30pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:10pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 7
UA116/6395	9:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju Air; HX: Hong Kong Airlines; LJ: Jin Air; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure;ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
6:30AM	6:45AM	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

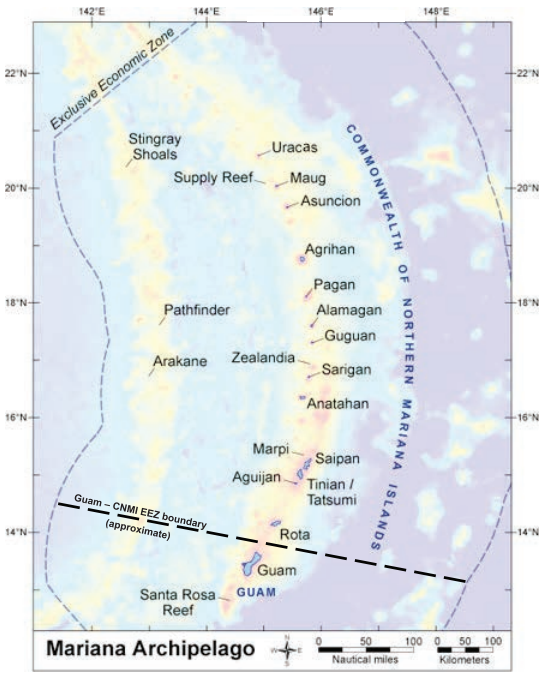
SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

THE INCREMENTAL TAKE OVER OF WATERS IN THE MARIANAS ARCHIPELAGO BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



2008:
Marianas Archipelago

Total area of Marianas Archipelago Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) 970,772 sq. km.

Estimated Marine Closures

Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to commercial fishing	< 1 %
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to potential mining activities	< 1 %
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to free passage by Mariana residents	< 1 %
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to U.S. Military Activities	< 1 %

Closures related to U.S. Military activities are included

2009:
Marianas Archipelago
with the Mariana Trench National Marine Monument

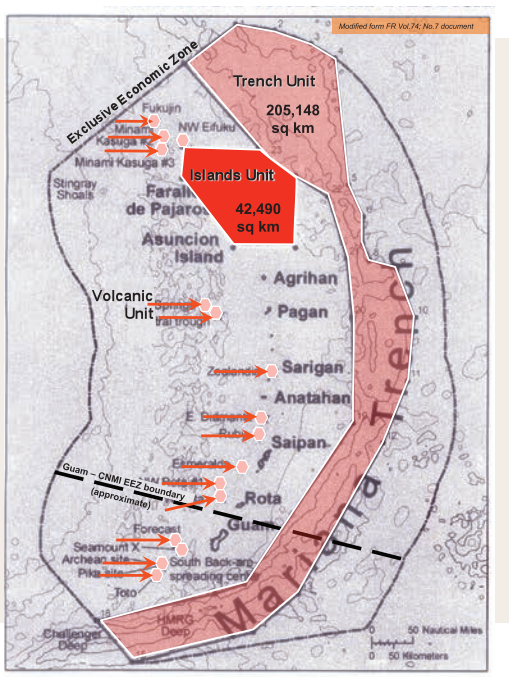
Commercial Fishing and mining PROHIBITED in Marine Monument

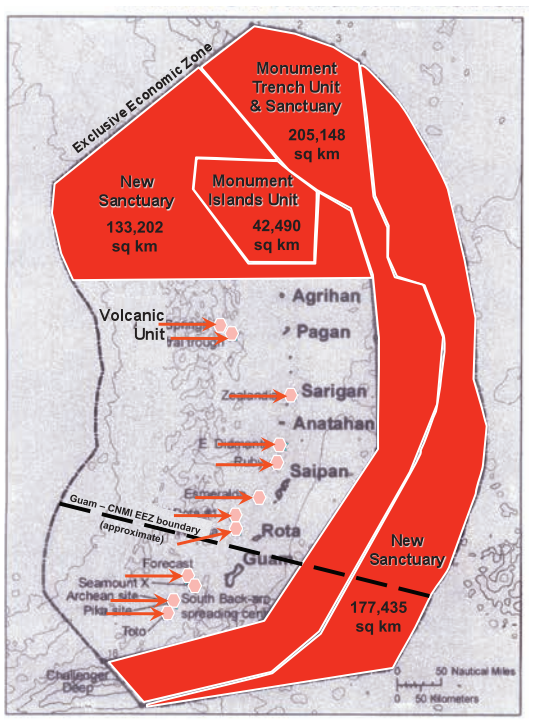
Commercial Mining PROHIBITED in Marine Monument

Estimated Marine Closures

Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to commercial fishing	4.4%
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to potential mining activities	25.5%
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to free passage by Mariana residents	4.4%
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to U.S. Military Activities	< 1 %

These marine closure estimates do not include U.S Military activities





2017?:
Marianas Archipelago
with Pew's Vision of a Sanctuary

Commercial Fishing and mining PROHIBITED in Marine Monument and Marine Sanctuary

Commercial Mining PROHIBITED in Marine Monument

Estimated Marine Closures

Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to commercial fishing	> 57.5 %
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to potential mining activities	> 57.5 %
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to free passage by Mariana residents	> 57.5 %
Estimated percentage of EEZ **CLOSED** to U.S. Military Activities	< 1 %

These marine closure estimates do not include U.S Military activities

This figure was modified from the sanctuary nomination document by "Pew Charitable Trusts" and "Friends of Mariana Trench"

Quotes from the Pew Sanctuary nomination document

'The "Friends of the Mariana Trench" claim "The Trench Unit could be included in a potential sanctuary if the water column habitat is included, as could the area east of the Trench Unit out to the extent of the US EEZ without negatively affecting any fisheries on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, or Guam."

The Friends further state: "We believe that a permitting system would be appropriate for limiting and managing the types of vessels entering the sanctuary…. The permitting system should be based on Saipan, and support for local people to apply for a permit, especially those related to cultural activities, should be provided using federal resources." (emphasis added)

Quote from the Friends of Mariana Trench letter to President Obama dated 5 December 2016

"We specifically request that you forego the usual sanctuary process and direct the Secretary of Commerce to begin a sanctuary designation process immediately in the Northern Mariana Islands…." (emphasis added)

Paid for by Marianas Conservation

Should the Sanctuary process be initiated, it will allow outside environmental groups, such as the Pew Charitable Trusts, to push for the creation of additional marine protected areas under a sanctuary status. Pew has already made it very clear that they want to EXPAND MONUMENT BOUNDARIES USING THE SANCTUARY PROCESS!

DOES THE CNMI REALLY WANT TO PURSUE A SANCTUARY PROCESS AND RISK HAVING MORE OF OUR EXTRACTION RIGHTS TAKEN AWAY?

Marianas Conservation believes that if the Sanctuary process is implemented then the Pew Charitable Trusts will use their deep pockets, political power, and media savvy to hi-jack the process to ensure their vision for the Marianas archipelago will be presented to the federal government for final acceptance.

SIMBANG GABI DONATION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
United Filipino Organization outgoing president Romeo Malasarte, middle right, receives a $500 donation from the Simbang Gabi Group during UFO's appreciation night party held at the Malasarte residence in Susupe on Dec. 24.

Nominees sought for SCC Business Person of the Year

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is now accepting nominations for its annual Business Person of the Year award.

In an email message, it urged all Chamber members to think of a person who supports the local workforce, actively attends Chamber events and programs, and exerts efforts for the community.

To nominate an awardee, one must first obtain a nomination form from the Chamber, then submit the form to Chamber executive director Jill Arenovski at executive@saipanchamber.com on or before today, Dec. 30.

The winner would be honored at the 2017 installation dinner in January. The exact date of the installation dinner has yet to be announced. Nominations would be kept confidential while past recipients of the award will vote in a closed meeting.

Past recipients include Alex Youn of AC Pacific (2015), Vicky Benavente of Pacific Island Club (2014), Marcie Tomokane of Bank of Guam (2013), Marcia E. Ayuyu of RJ Corp. and Anthony Pellegrino of Saipan Sea Ventures (2012), Bob Jones of Triple J Ent. (2011), Jim Arenovski of Delta Management (2010), Ben Babauta of DFS (2009), Kathryn Barry of KB Communications (2008), K.J. Kim of Asiana Airlines (2007), Juan T. Guerrero of Herman's Modern Bakery (2006), David M. Sablan of Century Insurance (2005), Mark Erwin of Continental Airlines (2004), Jerry Tan of TanHoldings (2003), Alex Sablan of Saipan Shipping Co. (2002), Jay Jones of Triple J Motors (2001), Wendi Herring of PIC (2000), Marian Aldan-Pierce of DFS (1999), Joe Ayuyu of McDonald's (1998), Ed Camacho of Pacific Financial (1997), and Efrain Camacho of EFC Engineers (1996), among many.

Life's better with Smiles from Mobil

Make any occasion extra special with Smiles from Joeten Supermarkets and Mobil! From November 18 to January 6, 2017, Smiles members will receive a $2 discount coupon towards their next $25 purchase at Joeten Dandan Market, Joeten Kagman Market, Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center and Joeten Susupe Shopping Center, with every $25 gross* fuel purchase at Mobil.

For more Smiles, you'll also get a coupon for 10% off your next $25 minimum Mobil fuel purchase when you spend a minimum of $25 at Joeten Dandan Market, Joeten Kagman Market, Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center and Joeten Susupe Shopping Center.

Find out more at www.fuels.mobil.mp

Mobil™
An ExxonMobil Brand

Offer ends on January 6, 2017 or while discount supplies last, whichever occurs first. Joeten Supermarkets $2 discount coupons ("Joeten coupons") are redeemable only with Mobil fuel receipt attached from November 18, 2016 until January 31, 2017. Joeten coupons may not be used to purchase alcoholic beverages and tobacco products and are not valid with any other Joeten Supermarkets promotion. Joeten Supermarket corporate clients are not eligible to participate in this promotion. Mobil 10% fuel discount coupons ("Mobil coupons") are redeemable from November 18, 2016 until January 31, 2017 with a minimum of $25 fuel purchase. Mobil coupons may not be used for Fleet Card and non-fuel purchases. See detailed terms and conditions at participating Saipan Mobil service stations or call our toll-free hotline at 1-866-486-7751 Monday through Friday from 10am to 7pm for more details.
* "Gross" as used herein means inclusive of any discount to which the purchaser is entitled under a coupon issued in connection with this Promotion.
All trademarks used herein, other than "Joeten Dandan Market, Joeten Kagman Market, Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center and Joeten Susupe Shopping Center", are trademarks of Exxon Mobil Corporation or one of its subsidiaries.

EXECUTIVE HOME WITH PANORAMIC OCEAN VIEW, LAULAU HEIGHTS, SAIPAN

NOW UP FOR AUCTION!

AUCTION WILL BE HELD AT THE LAW OFFICES OF S. JOSHUA BERGER ON JANUARY 10, 2017 AT 1:00 P.M.

This is a Foreclosure Auction as authorized under Order of the Superior Court in Civil Action No. 15-0199

PLACE: Law Offices of S. Joshua Berger, D' Torres Bldg, Garapan, Saipan

Contact Auctioneer, Mich Brel at 235-8060 or via email at brelmich@gmail.com for more information.

DPS: Kidnapping call is classified a prank call

On Thursday, Dec. 28, 2016, at about 6:15pm DPS Central received a call from a possible kidnapping victim on the 911 emergency line. The female caller's voice was panicking over the phone, crying, claiming she and another girl were assaulted and were being kidnapped by two Asian males operating a blue Yaris.

The victim's cell phone went dead and DPS Dispatch attempted to call the caller back for details. After several attempts the victim answered the phone and claimed she and the other kidnapped female were on a dirt road in Kannat Tabla village. The phone went dead again. Police officers were dispatched to the area.

The victim was sobbing on the phone and sounded in fear of her life. DPS activated all available personnel to search for the victims and suspects operating the blue Yaris. The Criminal Investigation Bureau, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Commonwealth Ports Police, and Drug Enforcement Task Force were assisted by providing law enforcement personnel and setting up a command post at the San Vicente Church parking lot area. Law enforcement spread out the island searching for the blue Yaris. Detectives were able to text the victim on her cell phone confirming the kidnapping incident and attempting to obtain the victim's location.

Checkpoints were set up on Capital Hill, Kagman, Dandan, and San Vicente villages, while police investigators obtained a search warrant signed by Superior Court associate judge Joseph N. Camacho to obtain the phone records from IT&E to help locate the phone records, subscriber/owner triangulation of the phone listed on the 911 caller ID.

Upon serving the warrant on IT&E, police located the owner/subscriber of the phone and residence location. The phone was seized by police early Thursday morning, Dec. 29, 2016, at 2:18am. Preliminary investigation revealed the phone call was a prank. Police confirmed the names given to the 911 operator and locations were fictitious. The kidnapping case was disregarded. Over 50 law enforcement personnel from local and federal agencies were activated as a result of the prank call. The investigation is ongoing. ***(DPS)***

Kanazawa stepping down

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Chris Kanazawa, state director for Hawaii and Western Pacific, steps down from his post at the end of the year.

HILO, Hawaii—Chris Kanazawa, a White House appointee under President Obama's administration, announced yesterday his departure from his position as state director for U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development at the end of 2016.

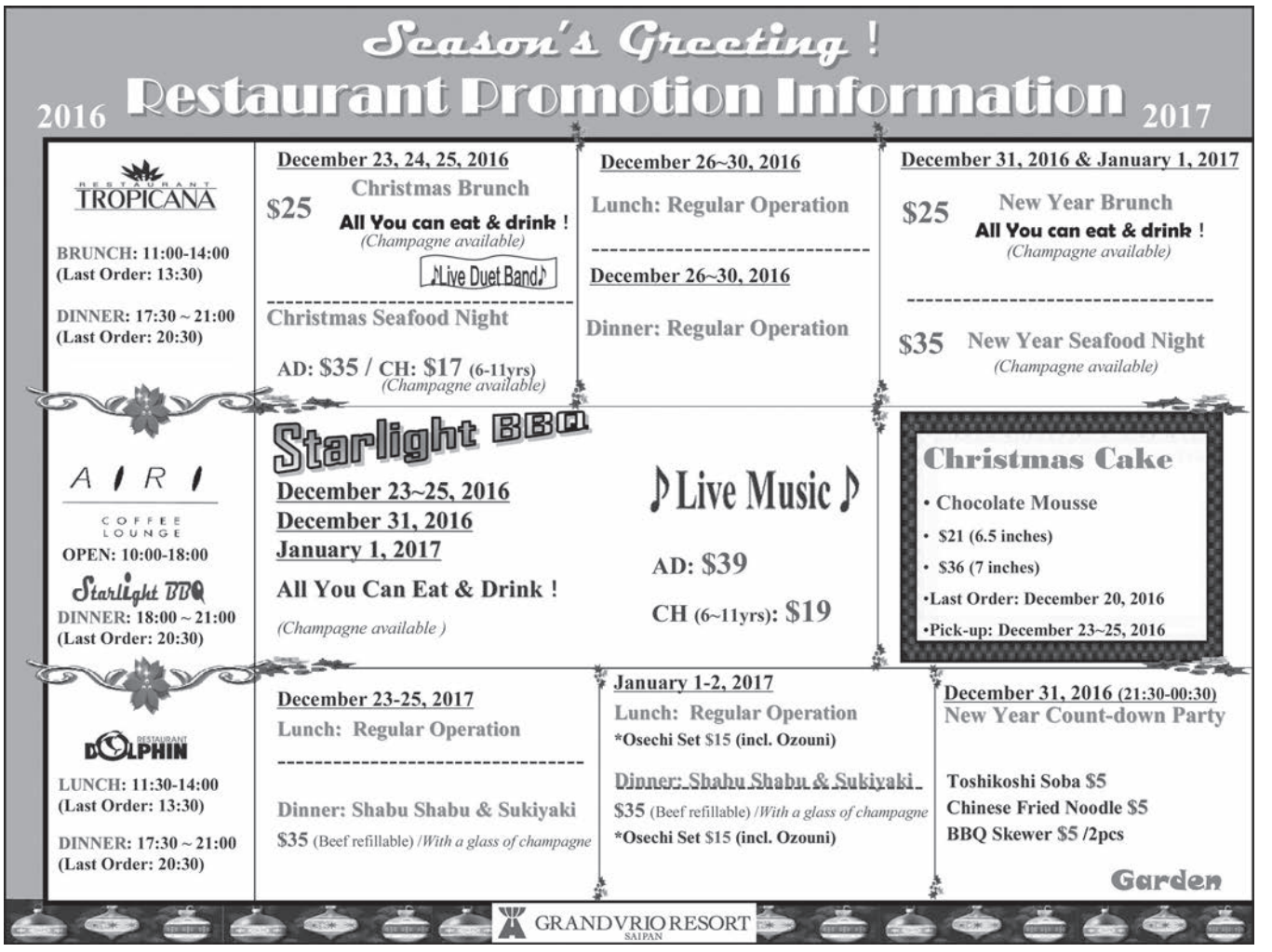
Kanazawa was appointed to his post in February 2010, supported by recommendations from the late senator Daniel K. Inouye and retired senator Daniel Akaka. As one of 47 Rural Development state directors across the nation, Kanazawa has been responsible for investments in Hawaii, American Samoa and the Western Pacific regions.

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants for a variety of purposes including home loans and repairs, water and wastewater infrastructure, business assistance, utilities, renewable energy, and essential public facilities in rural communities. During Kanazawa's tenure, he facilitated nearly $3 billion in financial assistance across Hawaii and the Pacific Islands.

"For the past seven years, it has been my honor and privilege to serve President Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and help improve the quality of life and increase economic opportunities for families and rural communities in Hawaii, American Samoa, and the Western Pacific," said Kanazawa.

Prior to Kanazawa's appointment, his professional career included holding president and CEO positions with Amfac/JMB Hawaii, Coldwell Banker Pacific Commercial Properties, and Parker Ranch, Inc. Kanazawa did not indicate any future plans upon his departure from USDA.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, offers programs designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. More information is available at www.rd.usda.gov/hi. ***(USDA)***



Agape Mathematics
AMW
Warriors
Agape's FREE Math Tutoring!!!
When: 6-8 pm on weekdays
Where: Agape Christian School
What: The Agape Math Warriors are going to contribute their math advantage to the community
Who: 1st-to-8th-grade students who are poor in Math and who want to improve and discuss math.
What to bring: Stationery (pencil, eraser, ruler etc.) and school math textbook
AGAPE
BALI FASHION
EUCON
MIDDLE ROAD
SUBWAY
It's Free!!!
If you are interested
Please contact Ms. Claire Song at (670) 989-6699 , or email us at agapemathtutoring@gmail.com at any time, or you can come to Agape Christian School after January 4th..
*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, which giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5)
Sponsored by Modern Office Supply, Joeten and PIC. More sponsors are needed.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-17-010

SAIPAN SEWER LINE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
(S-14-035)

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the replacement of sewer line in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists, in general of the replacement of asbestos cement pipe (ACP) in the area of San Antonio, Chalan Kanoa, and Susupe Village. The work shall be done not to disrupt the daily operation of the sewer discharge. The Project is to replace approximately ± 260 LF of existing 10-inch ACP, ± 2200 LF of existing 8-inch ACP, and ± 250 LF of existing 6-inch ACP, existing sewer manhole rehabilitation, installation of new concrete sewer manhole, 4-inch and 6-inch service lateral connections, installation and monitoring of wastewater temporary by-pass pumping system and road restoration.

This project is funded by a grant from the United Sates of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **300 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 12, 2017 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-IFB-17-010, Saipan Sewer Line Replacement Project",*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 02, 2017**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All responses to this IFB shall take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the proponent awarded a contract. Successful proponents will be required to submit a copy of a valid CNMI Business license in compliance with the Contractor's Registration and Licensing Laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, upon award of the contract. The Contractor and all subcontractors will be obligated to pay wage rates not less than the current CNMI minimum wage, prevailing through the period of contract, as indicated in the web page: https://marianaslabor.net/. The proponents shall be required to comply with all applicable CNMI and Federal Laws.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered Prospective Bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 17, 2016** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Birhen Martinez, CUC Water/Wastewater Senior Engineer – via email address birhen.martinez@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC Purchasing Assistant-via email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in said bid documents, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION TO BID
CUC-ITB-17-015

SALE AND REMOVAL OF SCRAP MATERIALS FROM THE WAREHOUSE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is inviting interested individuals and firms to bid on CUC Scrap materials located in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Bid Package may be obtained at no charge upon registration at the CUC, Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Dandan, Saipan, between 7:30 AM to 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays.

One (1) original and One (1) copy must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-ITB-17-015, CUC Sale & Removal of Scrap Materials from the Warehouse"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 17, 2017**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

Bidders must sign a Waiver of Liability, removing CUC's liability from claims resulting from violations relating to the removal and disposal of the scrap materials. CUC shall transfer and assign the scrap materials to the prospective bidder in an "As is, Where is" condition. By accepting the transfer and assignment, the bidder acknowledges that CUC has made no representation or warranties of the merchantability, quality, fitness, and condition of the scrap materials.

The scrap materials may be inspected by appointment only, between the hours of 9:00 AM thru 3:00 PM Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, by contacting CUC Warehouse Division at telephone no. 322-6585.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in the best interest of the CUC.

All inquiries must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 9, 2017, to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC Purchasing Technician for Procurement via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

GARY CAMACHO
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Island Snapshots

READ-ALOUD SESSION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
First lady Diann Torres seeks student response to the story *Polar Express* after her read-aloud session with one of Garapan Elementary School's third grade class.

ANNUAL CONCERT
Some of the *man'amko* perform a Christmas-themed skit during their concert at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe on Dec. 20. MICHAEL T. SANTOS

TREASURES OF THE CNMI
Winners of the themed game "Treasures of the Northern Marianas" receive a treasure chest of "gold" chocolate bars and a cake, presented by Marianas Visitors Authority Trade Marketing & PR executive in Russia Dennis Nikolaev, far left, and MVA Travel Trade Marketing & PR manager in Russia Svetlana Vasilevskaya, second from left. The game was conducted as part of the Marianas seminar promoting Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to travel agents on Dec. 8, 2016, in Vladivostok, Russia. MVA

MOBILE APP JON PEREZ
Guam senator-elect Wil Castro, right, talks about the Guam land mobile app with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, seated right, and Rep. Vinnie Sablan, Guam Bureau of Statistics staff Jesse Rojas, and Rep. Edwin Propst on Tuesday last week at the Governor's Office conference room.

Business

Trump takes credit for 8,000 jobs, talks with Obama

PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP)—After weeks of giving only brief comments to the media, Donald Trump made a series of public statements Wednesday, applauding the return of 8,000 jobs to the U.S. and hailing his discussions with President Barack Obama.

In one of his cameos on the front steps of his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, Trump touted plans by a Japanese mogul to bring those jobs to the United States. They could be the first of the 50,000 jobs tech billionaire Masayoshi Son promised to create after meeting with the president-elect earlier in December.

In the grand scheme of the economy, the jobs announcement is unlikely to have a major impact. Still, it's another example of how Trump is trying to stoke voters' belief that he is actively fighting for their well-being.

Son is the founder and chief executive of SoftBank, one of Japan's largest technology outfits. He owns the U.S. mobile carrier Sprint, which Trump said Wednesday would be moving 5,000 jobs "back" to the United States. Son also controls OneWeb, which Trump said would hire 3,000 workers.

It was unclear whether the president-elect was referencing the Dec. 6 commitment by Son to invest $50 billion in the United States and create 50,000 jobs.

Trump said the addition of 8,000 jobs was "because of what's happening and the spirit and the hope."

Still, the U.S. job market has been robust for much of 2016. Employers have added more than 2.2 million jobs over the past 12 months—a sign of economic health that pre-dates Trump's presidential victory.

Sprint has struggled since its 2013 acquisition by SoftBank. The carrier shed roughly 9,000 workers between 2012 and 2016, reducing its staff to 30,000, according to annual reports.

Sprint's attempt to join with rival T-Mobile failed in 2014 after regulators objected to combining two of the four largest mobile telecom companies in the United States. Analysts say a Trump administration would be more likely to approve telecom mergers, including a deal between Sprint and T-Mobile.

Sprint Chief Executive Marcelo Claure said in a statement that the company is "excited" to work with Trump.

"We believe it is critical for business and government to partner together to create more job opportunities in the U.S. and ensure prosperity for all Americans," Claure said.

The Sprint jobs announcement came after tensions rose and fell Wednesday between Trump and Obama. Trump has made it clear that it didn't sit well with him when Obama recently boasted that he would have won the election if he'd been running.

Trump appeared yet again Wednesday night on those steps, this time alongside legendary boxing entrepreneur Don King, who appeared to be one of several guests attending a dinner party. King carried about a dozen flags, including those of the U.S. and Israel; wore two big diamond necklaces, one of the Star of David and one of the American flag; and sported a large pin featuring a picture of Trump.

Trump addressed a range of questions, from tensions over Israeli settlements to accusations that Russia hacked the U.S. election.

On Russia, Trump said computers have "complicated lives very greatly."

He did not address calls from some on Capitol Hill for sanctions against Russia, saying, "We don't have the kind of security we need."

He added, "Nobody knows what's going on," and said he believes "we have to get on with our lives."

With King by his side, Trump dismissed days of tense remarks by the outgoing and incoming presidents about who would win if they were to hypothetically run against each other, saying he and Obama had "a very, very good talk."

"We talked about it and smiled about it and nobody is ever going to know because we are never going to be going against each other," Trump said.

BP buys Woolworths fuel business in Australia for $1.3B

LONDON (AP)—Oil company BP says it has agreed to buy the fuel business of Australian supermarket chain Woolworths Ltd for $1.3 billion as part of its efforts to rebuild itself.

The deal includes 527 fuel convenience sites and 16 other development sites across Australia. That adds to the 350 BP-owned gas stations in the country, and some 1,000 other BP-branded outlets owned by independent business partners.

The deal, announced Wednesday, is subject to approval from Australian authorities and is expected to complete over the next year.

BP, based in London, has been trying to rebuild its operations after having to sell assets to pay for the costs of the 2010 Gulf of Mexico disaster.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315 • **www.crm.gov.mp**

Frank M. Rabauliman
Administrator

Frances A. Castro
Director

PUBLIC NOTICE

APPLICATION FOR A CNMI WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION

The Antidegradation Policy of the CNMI Water Quality Standards of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands states that the protection and maintenance of the quality of the waters of the Commonwealth are an historic and legal right of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, and that this shall be public policy of the Commonwealth. Any proposed activity that will impact the waters of the Commonwealth must receive a Water Quality Certification from the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ). In issuing a Water Quality Certification, BECQ must assure that the proposed activity complies with all applicable provisions of the CNMI Water Quality Standards and federal Clean Water Act, will not interfere with the attainment of maintenance of the existing or designated uses of the Commonwealth waters, and that all appropriate and practicable steps have been taken to minimize potential adverse impacts to aquatic life and human health.

Upon accepting a complete application, BECQ notifies the applicant to publish a notification which describes the proposed activity and potential impacts on water quality. A thirty (30) day public period commences from the data of the first publication of the notice.

The Administrator of BECQ may conduct a public hearing to solicit comments on the application if a hearing is requested by the public. BECQ will make a determination for issuing a Water Quality Certification based upon a complete technical review of the application and the public comments received.

BECQ is soliciting comments on the following application for a CNMI Water Quality Certification:

1. **Applicant:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX, 75 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105-3901
2. **Applicable Statutory Authority:** Clean Water Act, PL 92-500 (33 U.S.C. 1251 ex. Seq.), CNMI Commonwealth Environmental Protection Act (Public Law No. 3-23); CNMI, Water Quality Standards (NMIAC Title 65 Chapter 130).
3. **Location of Proposed Activity:** Territorial waters of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands [note: the draft General Permit covers geographic areas where EPA is the permitting authority including four states, Indian country lands in various states and the U.S. Pacific Island territories, but for the purposes of this water quality certification, DEQ is only concerned with CNMI waters.]
4. **Description of Proposed Activity:** Renewal of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit for stormwater discharges from construction activities. This General Permit authorizes and regulates stormwater discharges from construction activities. Rather than apply for an individual stormwater discharge permit, construction activities can notify BECQ and EPA of their intent to control, treat, and discharge their stormwater under the requirements of the General Permit. If BECQ grants water quality certification for EPA's General Permit, then construction activities that intend to discharge stormwater under the requirements of the General Permit need not seek additional water quality certification from BECQ. However, industries that intend to discharge stormwater under the requirements of the General Permit are still required to submit Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans to BECQ for approval.
5. **More information:** For additional information on EPA's NPDES Construction General Permit for stormwater discharges associated with construction activities, visit EPA's Construction General Permit (CGP) website at https://www.epa.gov/npdes/epas-draft-2017-construction-general-permit-cgp or download the Fact Sheet at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-04/documents/proposed_2017_cgp_factsheet_final.pdf.

Public Notice Date: December 30, 2016

Comment Period Closes: January 30, 2017

Written comments and inquiries should be submitted to BECQ within thirty (30) days of the first publication of this notice. Please mail comments to: Administrator, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP, 96950, or e-mail frankrabauliman@becq.gov.mp.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
SCHEDULE OF ELECTRIC CHARGES AND RATES

By order of the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, CUC is authorized to adjust the Fuel Adjustment Charge, previously known as Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause or LEAC, depending on the price of oil. Adjustments are made when the "Mean of Platts Singapore" monthly pricing equals or exceeds a 4.5% differential of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the Fuel Adjustment Charge. Due to an increase in the average fuel prices, CUC will adjust the fuel-charge by 8.3%. Accordingly, the Fuel Adjustment Charge has increased from $0.14323 per kWh to $0.15512 per kWh effective **January 1, 2017.**

BASE RATES

		RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	GOVERNMENT	MP*
1	Monthly Customer Charge	$ 7.00	$ 10.00	$ 10.00	$ 9.06
2	Base Rates Per kWh:				
	KWH LEVELS				
	1) 1 to 350	$ 0.0210	$ 0.1130	$ 0.1240	$ 0.1070
	2) 351 to 1,200	$ 0.0970	$ 0.1130	$ 0.1240	$ 0.1070
	3) 1,201 and over	$ 0.1580	$ 0.1130	$ 0.1240	$ 0.1070
3	Public Law 16-7 Credit (Rebate) Per kWh -- all usage	$ (0.0230)	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Municipal Pumping

FUEL ADJUSTMENT CHARGE or FAC (Previously known as Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause or LEAC)

	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	GOVERNMENT	MP*
Current FAC (Effective 01/01/17)	$ 0.15512	$ 0.15512	$ 0.15512	$ 0.15512
Previous FAC (12/01/16 - 12/31/16)	$ 0.14323	$ 0.14323	$ 0.14323	$ 0.14323

*Municipal Pumping

PUBLIC STREETLIGHTING AND PRIVATE AREA LIGHTING TARIFF

Availability: Applicable to public outdoor streetlighting service and private area lighting where CUC owns, maintains and operates such facilities.

Energy Charge: The Energy Charge is the kWh multiplied by the sum of the applicable Electric Base Rate and the Fuel Adjustment Charge.

Fixture Charge: See below.

	FIXTURE TYPE	WATTS	KWH/MONTH	FIXTURE CHARGE PER MONTH
1	Long Arm	250	101	$ 11.67
2	Short Arm	175	71	$ 8.33
3	LED	140	57	$ 10.83

ELECTRIC NON-RATE FEES

1	Late Charge (monthly)	1% of Past Due
2	NSF Check / Returned Check Charge	$ 40.00
3	Convenience Fee (for pay-by-phone and online payments) - Temporarily Suspended	$ 1.50
4	Unauthorized Connection	$ 550.00
5	Reconnection at the Pole	$ 200.00
6	Investigation (no charge for first two investigations)	$ 210.00
7	Disconnection Notice - Temporarily Suspended	$ 15.00
8	Meter Change Out	$ 95.00
9	New Service - Single Phase	$ 135.00
10	Inspection of Service (no charge for first two inspections)	$ 90.00
11	Meter Test - Single Phase	$ 75.00
12	Meter Test - Three Phase	$ 110.00
13	Disconnection at the Meter	$ 45.00
14	Reconnection at the Meter	$ 60.00

Updated January 2017

Nation

Dylann Roof won't work to spare his life in church massacre

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP)—Charleston church shooter Dylann Roof says he won't call any witnesses or present evidence while representing himself during the punishment phase of his death penalty trial, but he is working hard to keep secret potentially embarrassing evidence about himself and his family.

Just exactly what that evidence is remains a mystery. Roof, the judge and prosecutors carefully tiptoed around describing it during a hearing Wednesday. The judge has indicated that it may be allowed during the penalty phase of the trial, which starts next week.

The same jurors who convicted Roof earlier this month of killing nine black church members in a racially motivated attack will hear from Roof as well as testimony from the families of victims. At the end of the penalty phase, the panel will decide whether Roof, who is white, should be put to death or spend the rest of his life in prison.

Roof was warned by U.S. Judge Richard Gergel that being his own lawyer was a bad idea.

"That's your decision," Gergel said. "I think that highlights my advice to you that you aren't served by being your own counsel."

Gergel told Roof to talk to his grandfather, who is a lawyer, and other family members one last time. He told Roof he has until the start of the penalty phase Tuesday to change his mind and rehire his high-powered, publicly funded defense team.

AP

In this June 18, 2015 file photo, Charleston, S.C., shooting suspect Dylann Storm Roof is escorted from the Cleveland County Courthouse in Shelby, N.C.

Roof spoke for less than 10 minutes of the 35-minute hearing. He told Gergel he does plan an opening and closing statement. He also told the judge he objects to prosecutors' plans to present a photograph of evidence in the court's possession. Roof, Gergel and assistant U.S. Attorney Jay Richardson talked about it without saying what it is.

Gergel said there was a hearing in which he decided it could be admitted in the penalty phase.

Roof also wanted a jailhouse statement left out of the penalty phase and evidence that involved his mother. No specifics were given. Gergel told Roof to go back to jail and write a motion for him to consider. Roof's ankle chain clanked as he walked back to the defense table in his jail jumpsuit.

Roof's defense attorneys wanted to call mental health experts, but Roof has indicated he will not. In his hate-filled, racist journal read to the jury during his trial, Roof said his doesn't believe in psychology.

"It is a Jewish invention and does nothing but invent diseases and tell people they have problems when they don't," Roof wrote.

Prosecutors also laid out their case Wednesday. Most of the penalty phase will involve up to 38 people related to the nine people killed and the three people spared when Roof went into Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17, 2015, sat through a 45-minute Bible study in the fellowship hall, then fired 77 shots as many of the worshippers hid under tables.

Gergel, who complained during the guilt phase that prosecutors were repeating themselves at times with witnesses, said he will allow Richardson to call as many witnesses related to the victims as he wants.

"The statute provides broad leeway for the victims to be heard, and I plan on honoring that," the judge said.

Video appears to show Texas police shooting man walking away

DALLAS (AP)—A police dashcam video released five months after a Texas officer shot a black man appears to show the man walking away as the officer fired, and the man's lawyer says he was not a threat.

David Collie was shot in the back, leaving him paralyzed, lawyer Nate Washington said Wednesday. Police said at the time of the July encounter that a Fort Worth officer fired twice, striking Collie "once in the lower torso."

The officer and a Tarrant County sheriff's deputy with him were off-duty at the time and working a security detail at an apartment complex, Washington said.

Police were searching for two shirtless black men who they believed had committed a robbery near a gas station, Washington said. Authorities said in a news release they issued at the time that Collie pulled a box cutter from his pocket and pointed it at the officers.

Collie was charged with aggravated assault on a public servant but a grand jury declined to indict him.

Fort Worth police on Wednesday defended the actions of the officers, who they have not named. Sgt. Marc Povero said in a statement that Collie failed to comply with commands to stop and that he appeared to point a silver object at the deputy, consistent with earlier reports by the robbery victim that a suspect flashed a silver handgun. Washington said Collie was not involved in the robbery. A box cutter found nearby didn't belong to Collie, Washington said.

Missing New Jersey family members found alive in Virginia

RICHMOND, Va. (AP)—A New Jersey woman and her 5-year-old great-granddaughter were found alive in Virginia on Wednesday, days after their disappearance during a holiday road trip prompted a multistate search, authorities said.

Barbara and La'Myra Briley were found near their vehicle on private property in Dinwiddie County, south of Richmond, just before 5 p.m. Wednesday, Virginia State Police spokeswoman Corinne Geller said in a brief statement. They were parked at least a mile from a paved road, the statement said.

Barbara Briley, 71, was flown by helicopter to VCU Medical Center in Richmond for treatment and was listed in serious condition, according to the statement. La'Myra appeared unharmed but was transported for medical evaluation.

A property owner had seen the car from afar, went to check on it and found the two sitting against a tree not far away, the statement said. Barbara Briley was unconscious at the time.

Maj. William Knott of the Dinwiddie County Sheriff's Office said the man had seen news reports, realized who the Brileys were and called 911.

"This person probably saved them," he said.

Barbara Briley was "not responsive to questions" when authorities arrived, but La'Myra, who has since been reunited with family, was "in good shape and very talkative," according to Knott.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950
Phone: (670) 237-6500 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
E-mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cpa.gov.mp

SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
SOLID WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES
PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-003-17

INVITATION FOR BIDS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is soliciting sealed bids for **Solid Waste Collection Services** for the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The **bid package** containing all the specifications, date of pre-bid meeting, and other requirements will be available at the Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Ports Authority, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, 2nd Floor of the Arrival Building beginning **December 16, 2016** upon payment of **$100.00** to be made at CPA Accounting Office, 2nd Floor, Departure Terminal Building, Saipan International Airport. All responses to this IFB shall take into account any costs that will be charged to the bidder awarded the contract for the project. Bidders shall also take into consideration all necessary badging requirements and fees for this project.

Bids will be received at the office of the Executive Director, mentioned above until **2:00 PM LOCAL TIME, Friday, January 13, 2017**. Bids are to be submitted in a sealed envelope clearly marked: "Bid for Solid Waste Collection Services at the Saipan International Airport, Project No. CPA-IFB-003-17". Bidders are to submit one (1) original and three (3) copies.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids submitted for: (a) any of the reasons set forth in this Invitation For Bids; or (b) any of the reasons set forth in the CPA Procurement Rules and Regulations regarding bid rejection or cancellation; or (c) sufficient justification exists that awarding the project contract would not be in the best interest of CPA.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Acting Executive Director

Date: December 16, 2016

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950-1055
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax (670) 234-5962
E-mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com
Website: www.cpa.gov.mp

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS
FOR
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES

BENJAMIN TAISACAN MANGLONA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
TERMINAL ROOF LEAK REPAIRS
PROJECT NO. CPA-RA-003-13

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested firms to perform construction management (CM) services for roof leak repairs at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport Terminal, Project No. CPA-RA-003-13, Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project is being funded by the Commonwealth Ports Authority. This project is in accordance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations and procedures shall be in full compliance with Section 40-50-202 Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Scope of Work (SOW) includes overall construction management services for the duration of the project. Details are available at CPA's Office of the Executive Director, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal. No fee is required for obtaining the proposal package.

Questions regarding this request for qualification (RFQ) statements must be submitted to Ms. Wendi L. Prater, Executive Assistant, in writing via hand delivery to the CPA Administration Office, via fax to (670) 664-3533 and/or emailed to wprater@cpa.gov.mp by no later than Friday, January 6, 2017, 4:30 p.m., local time.

At a minimum, the statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Overall CM experience in the Pacific area and especially in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands – 30 points;
2. CM experience related to airport projects; – 30 points;
3. Level of proficiency in performing CM services promptly; and level of experience with the local and federal regulations and requirements; – 15 points;
4. The general reputation of the firm in terms of quality of CM work experience, firm's ability to perform the services and the firm's professional integrity and competence – 15 points; and
5. Resumes of key personnel including current licenses and registrations of principal, if applicable – 10 points.

Interested Consultants shall submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf on a compact disc of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **4:30 p.m., FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2017.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

Discussions may be conducted with at least three (3) of the firms regarding the agreement requirements and technical approach and selection made there from, in order of preference, of no less than three (3) firms determined to be the most highly qualified to perform the services required.

An agreement shall be negotiated with the highest qualified construction management firm or company at a price determined to be fair and reasonable to the government. If a fair and reasonable price cannot be negotiated with the highest ranking qualified firm, then additional firms may be selected in order of competence and qualifications and negotiations continued until a fair and reasonable price is agreed upon.

All responses to this RFQ shall take into account any and all travel costs and taxes that will be charged to the consultant awarded an agreement for this project, including excise tax.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

For the Commonwealth Ports Authority

/s/ **CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO**
Acting Executive Director

Date: December 12, 2016

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-DPW/ASD-068

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 23, 2017 **TIME: 10:30 A.M.**

"PURCHAS OF A CLASS "H" VEHICLE – 4X4 PICK-UP TRUCK (4 FULL DOORS) WITH CAMPER SHELL FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY **LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN**, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE COMMONWEALTH RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS AND PROPOSALS; IN WHOLE OR IN PART, AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTION IN A BID IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS. ALL BIDS SHALL BECOME THE PROPERTY OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-DPW/BSC-069

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 23, 2017 **TIME: 11:00 A.M.**

"OFFICE SPACE RENTAL FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, BUILDING SAFETY CODE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY **LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN**, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE LESSOR MUST COMPLY WITH CNMI PUBLIC LAW 15-23, ARTICLE 5, SECTION 8652 (A) – (D).

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

Asia

Chinese middle class in uproar over alleged police brutality

BEIJING (AP)—The relatives of a Chinese man who died in a high-profile alleged police brutality case have decided not to sue, citing immense pressure, their lawyer said Thursday. The move comes despite thousands among China's middle class signing online petitions to protest the dropping of charges against police in a rare but concerted display of white-collar outrage with Beijing.

The signatories of at least two online petitions organized through university alumni networks are infuriated by the Beijing prosecutors' decision last Friday to drop charges against five police over the death of Lei Yang, a 29-year old graduate of prestigious Renmin University, in police custody in May. The five police were previously accused by investigators of using improper force and covering up Lei's death.

The outcry over the authorities' handling of Lei's death is the latest manifestation of simmering urban discontent in China, where Communist Party leaders are facing higher expectations—and increasing questions—from the expanding middle class over hot-button issues ranging from environmental pollution to unfairness in the judiciary.

"When something occurs in society that is so dark, so impossible to accept, then it's like an inner fire in our bones that's been sparked," said Yu Li, a signatory who works in the IT sector in Beijing.

Lei's family had initially planned to sue the five men directly if the decision to drop charges was upheld by higher authorities. By Wednesday night, however, they had ultimately chosen to drop further legal action, the family's lawyer, Chen Youxi, confirmed Thursday.

Chen cited the family as saying: "Due to our own reasons, the pressure is too great, the effort involved in a long litigation will be more than we can bear."

As news of the decision spread, supporters from various university alumni circles said the signature drive for the petitions should continue, with one group saying they refused to accept the case was over and would continue protesting.

The organizers of the petitions said they did not wish to take the protest to the street for fear of swift government retribution. For the same reason, they spoke on condition of anonymity. But the case has threatened to erode the legitimacy of the party among an influential social segment that's already impatient with yearslong social woes, including food safety scandals and widespread corruption.

ASIAN BRIEFS

S. Korean investigators look into alleged artist blacklist

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korean investigators have summoned the country's ambassador to France as an inquiry into a corruption scandal involving impeached President Park Geun-hye spread to allegations that her administration blacklisted thousands of artists for their political beliefs. The special prosecution team on Thursday was planning to question Mo Chul-min over a supposed blacklist of some 9,000 artists who were deemed unfriendly to Park's administration and allegedly denied government support. Mo served as Park's senior secretary for education and culture in 2013 and 2014. South Korea's opposition-controlled parliament on Dec. 9 voted to impeach Park over a corruption scandal. Park's political turmoil came after years of frustration over a heavy-handed leadership style critics blamed for setbacks in freedom of speech.

Bomb blasts hurt at least 32 at Philippine boxing match

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—At least 32 people were wounded when two bombs exploded while they were watching a boxing competition in a central Philippine town as part of an annual Roman Catholic holiday festival, police and other officials said Thursday. Sixteen of the wounded were admitted to various hospitals while 16 others went home after treatment of their injuries from the late-Wednesday twin blasts in Hilongos town in Leyte province, said Senior Inspector Jenyzen Enciso, the provincial police spokeswoman. Police recovered an 81 mm mortar cartridge and a cellphone apparently used to detonate the homemade bombs, she said. Nobody has claimed responsibility and investigators were trying to identify the attackers. The victims include at least 10 children aged 7 to 15 years old.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB17-DCCA/DYS-073 (A) (B)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 30, 2017 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF A CLASS "I" VEHICLE AND A 4X4 PICK UP TRUCK 4 DOORS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS, DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISION OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ ROBERT H. HUNTER
SECRETARY OF DCCA

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-DCCA/DYS-074 (CIF-ROTA)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 30, 2017 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF A CLASS "I" VEHICLE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS, DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

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/S/ ROBERT H. HUNTER
SECRETARY OF DCCA

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-DCCA/DYS-075 (CIF TINIAN)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 30, 2017 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF A CLASS "I" VEHICLE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS, DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISION OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ ROBERT H. HUNTER
SECRETARY OF DCCA

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO. ITB17-DPW/SWMD-067

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 23, 2017 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF A CLASS "H" VEHICLE – 4X2 PICK-UP TRUCK (4 DOORS, ACCESS OR CREW CAB) WITH ALUMINUM FLAT BED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DIVISION"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY **LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN**, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-DLNR/DFW-063

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 23, 2017 TIME: 9:30 A.M.

"BOAT CHARTER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES, A PROJECT UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CCNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RICHARD B. SEMAN
SECRETARY OF DLNR

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP NO.: RFP17-BECQ/DCRM-064

SUBMISSION: JANUARY 23, 2017 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"TO DESIGN AND ADMINISTER A CNMI MAJOR SITING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR THE BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND COASTAL – DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT"

THE SCOPE OF WORK IS AVAILABLE ON OR AFTER **DECEMBER 23, 2016** BY EMAIL REQUEST TO **erinderrington@becq.gov.mp**. **QUESTIONS** REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE E-MAILED TO **erinderrington@becq.gov.mp** NO LATER THAN THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, **JANUARY 11, 2017**.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSALS AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTION IN A PROPOSAL IF IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE PROPERTY OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ FRANK M. RABAULIMAN
ADMINISTRATOR OF BECQ

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-OMB-070

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 23, 2017 TIME: 1:00 P.M.

"PURCHASE OF SIX (6) LAPTOPS AND TWO (2) DESKTOP COMPUTERS FOR THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY **LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN**, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

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/S/ VIRGINIA C. VILLAGOMEZ
SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO. ITB17-DPS-065 (CIF-TINIAN)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 23, 2017 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF TWO (2) CLASS "F" VEHICLES – 4X4 PICK UP TRUCK (FOUR (4) FULL DOORS) FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, TINIAN BRANCH"

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/S/ JOEY P. SAN NICOLAS
MAYOR OF TINIAN & AGUIGUAN

/S/ JUAN E. SANTOS, JR.
RESIDENT DEPARTMENT HEAD, TINIAN DPS

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-DCCA/NAP-072

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 30, 2017 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"PURCHASE OF A CLASS "I" VEHICLE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL AFFAIRS, N.A.P. DIVISION"

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/S/ ROBERT H. HUNTER
SECRETARY OF DCCA

/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR, P&S

World

In parting shot, Kerry tears into Israel over settlements

WASHINGTON (AP)—Secretary of State John Kerry tore into Israel on Wednesday for settlement-building, accusing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of dragging Israel away from democracy and forcefully rejecting the notion that America had abandoned Israel with a controversial U.N. vote. Netanyahu accused the Obama administration of a biased bid to blame Israel for failure to reach a peace deal.

In a farewell speech, Kerry laid out a two-state vision for peace that he won't be in office to implement, but that the U.S. hoped might be heeded even after President Barack Obama's term ends. He defended Obama's move last week to allow the U.N. Security Council to declare Israeli settlements illegal, the spark that set off an extraordinary and deepening diplomatic spat between the U.S. and its closest Mideast ally.

"If the choice is one state, Israel can either be Jewish or democratic, it cannot be both, and it won't ever really be at peace," Kerry said in a speech that ran more than an hour, a comprehensive airing of grievances that have built up in the Obama administration over eight years but were rarely, until this month, discussed publicly.

Netanyahu pushed back in a hastily arranged televised statement in which he suggested he was done with the Obama administration and ready to deal with President-elect Donald Trump, who has sided squarely with Israel. The Israeli leader faulted Kerry for obsessing over settlements while paying mere "lip service" to Palestinian attacks and incitement of violence.

AP
Secretary of State John Kerry speaks about Israeli-Palestinian policy, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2016, at the State Department in Washington.

"Israelis do not need to be lectured about the importance of peace by foreign leaders," Netanyahu said from Jerusalem.

The dueling recriminations marked a low point for U.S.-Israel relations, and a bitter end to eight years of frustrated ties between Obama and Netanyahu, who quarreled repeatedly over settlements, the peace process and Obama's nuclear deal with Iran.

Trump, who has assured Israel it merely needs to "hang on" until he takes over, wouldn't say Wednesday whether settlements should be reined in. But he told reporters Israel was being "treated very, very unfairly by a lot of different people."

It was unclear whether Israel came up in a phone call Obama, while vacationing in Hawaii, placed to Trump on Wednesday morning. Nor was it obvious what impact Kerry's speech, coming in the final days of the administration, might have.

Netanyahu expressed concern that a French-hosted summit next month could lead to an international framework that the U.N. Security Council might then codify with Obama's assent, boxing Israel in. Yet Kerry seemed to rule out the possibility Obama would take more parting shots, such as promoting that type of U.N. resolution or recognizing Palestinian statehood.

The diplomatic fracas erupted last week when the U.S., in a departure from past policy, decided to abstain rather than veto a U.N. Security Council resolution calling Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem a violation of international law. Israel was incensed, and on Wednesday, Netanyahu claimed Israel has "absolute, indispensable evidence" the U.S. actually spearheaded the resolution.

Netanyahu offered what he called proof of U.S. collusion: a document, leaked to an Egyptian newspaper, that purports to be a Palestinian account of a December meeting between top U.S. and Palestinian officials. But White House spokesman Ned Price called it a "total fabrication" and added: "This meeting never occurred."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas responded to the speech by reaffirming that he's ready to resume peace talks if Israel halts settlement construction.

Turkey, Russia discussing Syria cease-fire

BEIRUT (AP)—Turkey and Russia are discussing a broader Syrian cease-fire after brokering the deal that evacuated rebel-held eastern Aleppo, Syrian opposition factions said Wednesday, but a number of rebel groups say they won't agree to anything until they get more details.

All previous attempts at enforcing a nationwide cease-fire in Syria have failed. The recent warming of ties between Russia and Turkey, who provide crucial support to opposing sides of the war, may prove to be a game changer, but the challenges are immense.

The foreign ministers of Turkey, Russia and Iran met in Moscow last week for talks on Syria that pointedly included no Syrians, indicating they prefer to pursue a grand bargain among great powers with stakes in the conflict rather than a domestic settlement between the government and the opposition.

An official with one of the factions confirmed to The Associated Press that Russian and Turkish officials were debating a cease-fire proposal that would encompass the whole of Syria. He spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks were ongoing.

Rebels have opposed previous proposals that would allow the government to continue its offensives around the outskirts of the capital, Damascus.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said later Wednesday that its embassy in the Syrian capital was hit by mortar fire, blaming the attack on "extremists" opposed to a peaceful settlement. It said a mortar round landed in the embassy courtyard without exploding, and another fell in the vicinity.

Turkey's Anadolu Agency said Wednesday morning that Ankara and Moscow had reached an agreement, and Turkish media reports quoted Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu as saying that a lasting cease-fire and political solution in Syria are "close." But no details were announced, and there was no confirmation from state officials.

Yasin Aktay, the spokesman for Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party, said the government is pushing for a cease-fire to be in place "as we enter 2017."

The Syrian opposition official said factions were holding vigorous discussions over the possibilities, while an official with a different group said the proposal has not been formally presented to the opposition.

"It is difficult to accept or refuse the matter before we look at the details, of course," said the official, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity so as not to prejudge intra-opposition talks.

Turkey, Russia discussing Syria cease-fire

QAYARA, Iraq (AP)—The mud was three inches deep in parts of the Madrag Camp for displaced Iraqis after the heavy overnight downpour. Water seeped into the blue-and-white tents, soaking families sleeping inside.

Mahmoud Mohammed Mussa spent the morning sweeping out rainwater from the tent where he lives with his two wives and 10 children after a miserable night unable to go back to sleep. His wives went about cooking a lunch of koba, a fried pastry filled with minced beef and onions.

"Rain is our chief enemy," declared Ahmed Ibrahim, a friend standing with Mussa outside the tent. "There is no solution except for the sun to shine on us again."

Madrag, also known as the Qayara Base Airstrip Camp, is home to some 2,500 families who fled from Mosul and a string of towns and villages west of the city. They are among some 120,000 who have been forced from their homes since the military launched its campaign in mid-October to retake the northern city from the Islamic Sate group. They've reached safety in camps in Nineveh province and in Iraq's Kurdish self-rule zone.

But rain and punishing winter weather—temperatures hovered just above freezing on Wednesday night—are making their lives miserable.

In the Madrag camp, the displaced Iraqis also complain of the scarcity of clean drinking water and medication for chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. They say the heating oil they are given is not enough.

"We were last given 20 liters of heating oil 17 days ago. That was enough for just two or three days," said Ahmed Aziz, a 35-year-old from Makhmour, north of Mosul.

"Everything in our tents was soaked," said Khedr Ibrahim, 45, who fled fighting in Tal Abta, a town west of Mosul, with his wife and 10 children nearly three weeks ago. "Life is difficult here, but, thanks be to God, we are safe here and, God willing, we will go home soon."

The camp's grounds were under a treacherous layer of mud on Wednesday. Residents were forced to cross canals of sewage water on slippery wood planks barely a foot (30 centimeters) wide.

Dirty job shows why cholera still kills in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—The men strip off their clothes, wrap themselves in rags and plug their nostrils with tobacco to hide the stench. They squeeze into a cramped outhouse with a reeking pit to scoop buckets of human excrement with their bare hands.

It's just another night's work for this four-man team of "bayakou"—the Haitian waste cleaners who take to the streets at night doing a miserable, indispensable job that creates such social scorn that few admit they do it at all.

"The hardest part is going into the pit. You have to get used to it," says crew boss Auguste Augustin as his shoeless team worked by candlelight, filling sacks with human waste to be loaded into a wheelbarrow and dumped before sunrise.

The pit latrine cleaners form the lowest ranks of a primitive sanitation system that is largely responsible for the fierce persistence of cholera in this country since it was introduced to the country's largest river in October 2010 by sewage from a base of U.N. peacekeepers. Haiti still relies mostly on crude methods of waste disposal that have crippled its ability to combat a water-borne illness that can cause diarrhea so severe that victims can die of dehydration in hours if they don't get treatment. It has sickened roughly 800,000 people and killed at least 9,500.

The U.N., which this month acknowledged not doing enough to help the country fight cholera while stopping short of an admission of responsibility for introducing it, has announced a new fundraising plan to battle the easily treatable disease. It seeks to raise $400 million from U.N. member states, with the first $200 million dedicated in large part to treating patients with care like oral rehydration fluids, while promoting improvements in hygiene by distributing supplies like chlorine and soap. Improving water, sanitation and health systems are also stated goals of this first phase.

Off the Wall

Driver boasts cruising through 240 consecutive green lights

NEW YORK (AP)—A New York City Uber driver is boasting that he drove through 240 green traffic lights before hitting a red light.

Noah Forman achieved the feat during a 27-minute drive through Manhattan that started at around 3:30 a.m. on Dec. 6.

Forman recorded his early-morning journey on video .

The recording shows him slowing to a crawl on some blocks to avoid hitting a red, and taking numerous turns to avoid having his path forward blocked.

"It seems like you go with where the lights take you," Forman told the Daily News. "The minute I think too hard and I veer off course, I just get hit with a red light somewhere."

The city Department of Transportation didn't immediately respond to a query about the viability of his claim.

It's the second time that Forman has attempted catching consecutive green lights. Two years ago, he said he hit 186 green lights in a row.

His latest drive began in Harlem and ended on the Lower East Side when he hit his first red light.

Forman said he would eventually like to double his record.

"I would love to take it further," he told the News. "Not any time soon. Maybe in a year or two, see if I could get 500."

Pastor: Ban names such as 'vegetarian schnitzel,' et al

BERLIN (AP)—Germany's agriculture minister has leapt to the defense of meat lovers, calling for a ban on names such as "vegetarian schnitzel" for meat-substitute products, which he said were misleading consumers.

Among the "wurst" offenders is "vegan curry sausage," a meat-free take on a heavily spiced pork dish born of post-World War II necessity and now considered a delicacy in Berlin - though largely unknown outside Germany.

"These terms are completely misleading and unsettle consumers," Agriculture Minister Christian Schmidt told Germany's Bild daily.

"I favor them being banned in the interest of clear consumer labeling," he was quoted as saying.

Schmidt has already contacted the European Union's executive branch to discuss extending rules that govern the use of the terms "milk" and "cheese" to apply to meat as well, his spokesman said Wednesday.

"He considers names such as vegan curry sausage and so forth to be misleading to consumers," Jens Urban told reporters. "Clarity and truth, transparency for consumers, those are the measures that should apply for the labeling of all products, always and forever."

Asked whether the measures could also affect beefsteak tomatoes, Urban said that the ministry wasn't aware of any "consumer confusion" about such products.

VESPA SANTA
Jimmy Barnes dressed as Santa takes his grandson Samuel Zeyla, 7, and his dog Hunter, center, for a drive on his Vespa scooter along University Parks Drive, Friday Dec. 23, 2017, in Waco, Texas. AP

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Woman leaves entire $1.2 million estate to animal shelter

ELIZBETHTON, Tenn. (AP)—A Tennessee woman's $1.2 million estate has gone to the dogs - and cats, too. The Johnson City Press reports Glenda Taylor DeLawder's bequest to an animal shelter was announced Christmas Day on the Carter County government website by Mayor Leon Humphrey. Humphrey says $540,000 will be given to the Elizabethton Carter County Animal Shelter to expand the dog and cat holding areas. It also pay for a new van that can be converted to transport dogs and cats to be spayed and neutered. Construction will begin on the shelter expansion Jan. 9, and Humphrey says the van is scheduled to arrive by March 1. DeLawder, who is described by her family as being an avid animal lover, died in November 2015.

Prosecutors: Man pulled gun, threatened family over TV show

WORCESTER, Mass. (AP)—Prosecutors say an argument over which television show to watch prompted a Massachusetts man to threaten his family members with a gun on Christmas morning. Corey Hodgdon was ordered held without bail pending a dangerousness hearing at his arraignment Tuesday on charges that include assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. Prosecutors say Hodgdon had gotten upset over what show the family was watching on television before he pulled a gun and issued threats during the incident on Sunday in Worcester. Police say some family members locked themselves in a bathroom. They were able to escape the home when Hodgdon went into the basement. Officers arrived at the scene, entered the home and arrested Hodgdon. Hodgdon's attorney requested her client undergo a mental health evaluation, which the judge granted.

Man armed with knife demands $2 in gas, then flees

PENNSVILLE, N.J. (AP)—Police are searching for a man who tried to hold up a New Jersey gas station for $2 worth of gasoline but fled after the attendant refused. NJ.com reports the attempted robbery occurred Tuesday night at the Coastal Gas Station in Pennsville Township. Police Chief Allen Cummings says the suspect was carrying a gas can when he first approached the attendant outside the station. The man pulled out a knife and demanded $2 in gasoline. When the attendant denied the request, the suspect ran off. Police are reviewing surveillance video from the station in an effort to identify the suspect.

A new Christmas classic? Chewbacca roars out 'Silent Night'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Chewbacca is no Bing Crosby, but the Wookie's rendition of "Silent Night" is adding some "Star Wars" flair to the Christmas classic. The site How It Should Have Ended re-mixed audio of Chewie's grunts and growls with clips from several "Star Wars" films to create a video that has been watched nearly 2.5 million times on YouTube. The parody song was first created as a joke in 1999 by web designer Scott Anderson, who writes on his website that he made it for a parody Christmas album, "Christmas With Chewbacca." The song has made the rounds online for several years.

Police: Sandwich links man to recent burglaries in Wyoming

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP)—A half-eaten peanut butter and jelly sandwich found at the scene led Wyoming police to arrest a burglary suspect. The Wyoming Tribune Eagle reports that Zachery Munoz has pleaded not guilty to three counts of burglary. Cheyenne police say someone on three separate occasions in September stole power tools and equipment from a business. In the first case, police say they found a half-eaten peanut butter and jelly sandwich at the scene. They dubbed the suspect the "PB&J burglar." Police say subsequent DNA testing done at the Wyoming State Crime Lab linked 26-year-old Munoz to the sandwich. He entered a plea earlier this month, and his trial is scheduled for February.

Rambo the pet alligator can stay, Florida officials say

LAKELAND, Fla. (AP)—A Florida woman is being allowed to keep her 6-foot-long pet alligator at home following a fight with state wildlife officials over the growing size of the reptile. A spokesman for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said Thursday that the agency had reached an agreement with Mary Thorn, allowing her to keep her 125-pound reptile named Rambo at home. Wildlife officials say alligators that measure more than 6 feet must have 2.5 acres of land. Rambo has earned local celebrity status in Lakeland, which is located between Tampa and Orlando. The alligator has been with Thorn for more than 11 years and wears clothes. Rambo was recently captured wearing a Santa hat. Thorn is not allowed to exhibit Rambo under the terms of the agreement.

Christmas gifts, ornaments stolen; man arrested on his roof

NASHUA, N.H. (AP)—Police say a man accused of stealing Christmas gifts and ornaments in a New Hampshire home break-in might not have escaped up the chimney like the Grinch but was found on his rooftop. Police say they got a call Monday from a Nashua homeowner who told them his back door had been kicked in and there was an unknown man in his house. They say the homeowner confronted the man, who fled with the gifts and ornaments. They say a short time later they found and arrested Carl Kirsch, who was hiding on his roof a couple of blocks away. Kirsch has been charged with burglary.

Cop does speeding college student a favor by tying necktie

MENOMONIE, Wis. (AP)—A Wisconsin police officer who stopped a speeding college student who was late for a presentation ended up tying his necktie for him. WBAY-TV reports the Menomonie Police Department posted dash cam video of the Nov. 30 traffic stop exchange on its Facebook page Tuesday. The video shows Officer Martin Folczyk pulling up behind the University of Wisconsin-Stout student in a parking lot. The student explained he was speeding because he was late to give a presentation and was trying to find a friend who could tie his necktie. Folczyk asked for the tie and made a knot for the student. He even adjusted it after the student put it on. The officer sent the student on his way with a warning to slow down.

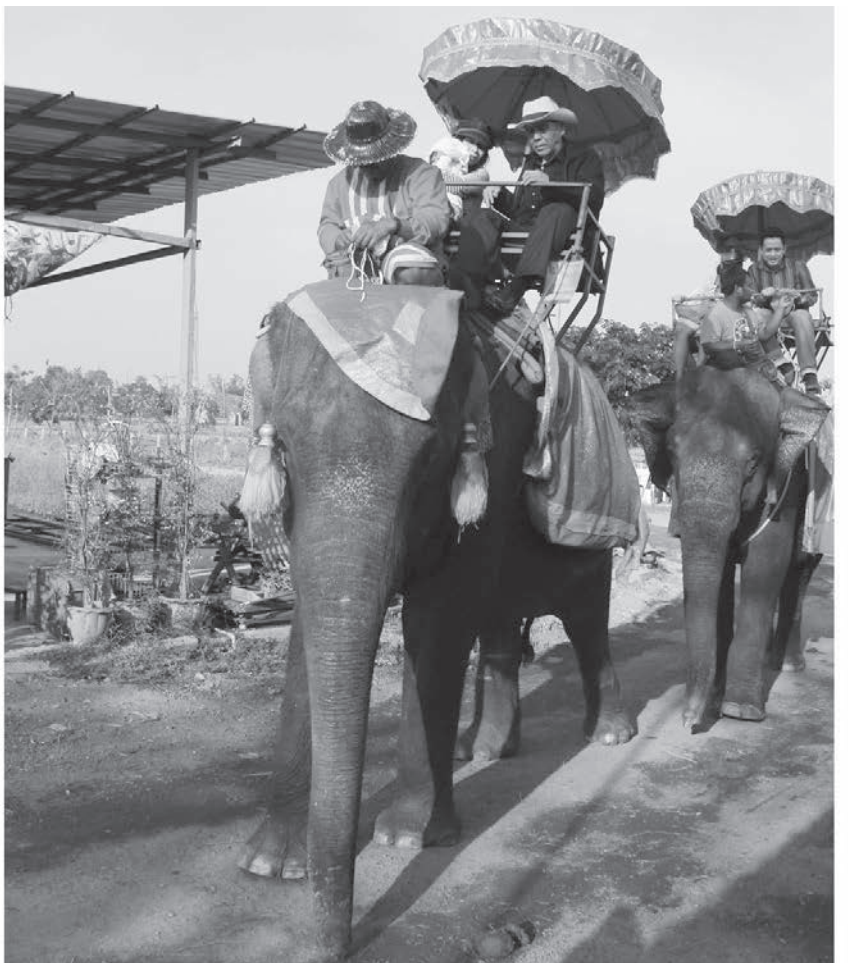
Good rescue it was: Yoda the tortoise saved from school fire

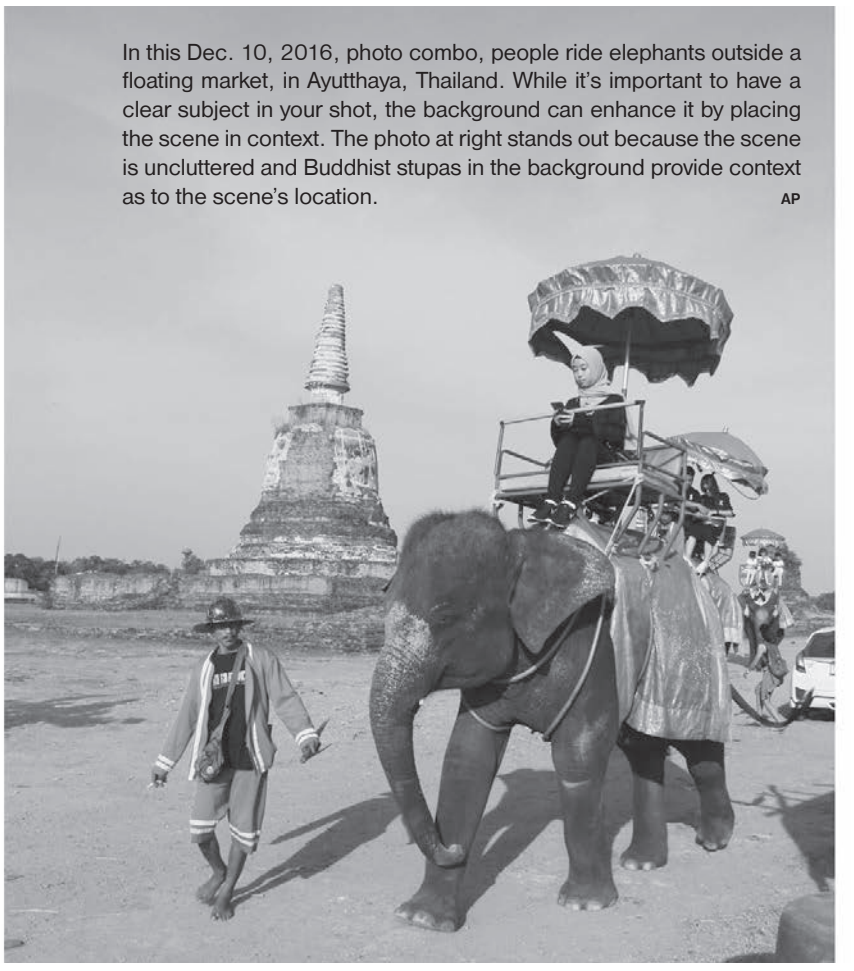
IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (AP)—Firefighters have rescued a Russian tortoise named Yoda at an eastern Idaho elementary school after a heating device caused his habitat to start smoldering. The Idaho Falls Fire Department says it responded early Wednesday to a fire alarm at Fairview Elementary School in Idaho Falls and found the building filled with smoke. Crews discovered a smoldering fire in a classroom in Yoda's 30-gallon enclosure and saved the tortoise. Bonneville School District Superintendent Charles Shackett says a heating pad meant to keep Yoda warm caused the problem. The hand-sized tortoise is fine and back home with his owner, a teacher. Shackett says he encourages pets in the classroom but will review animal habitat policies. School officials say the fire damage is minimal, and the building is being aired out.

Science & Technology

Avoid dull snapshots: Tips for taking stunning pictures

By ANICK JESDANUN
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER





In this Dec. 10, 2016, photo combo, people ride elephants outside a floating market, in Ayutthaya, Thailand. While it's important to have a clear subject in your shot, the background can enhance it by placing the scene in context. The photo at right stands out because the scene is uncluttered and Buddhist stupas in the background provide context as to the scene's location. AP

SINGAPORE (AP)— Smartphone cameras have seen dramatic improvements, but technology alone won't produce shots that grab attention.

That's where the human eye comes in. Here are eight tips to keep in mind when composing that shot, whether of family during the holidays or sights during a vacation. You don't need to own a fancy camera or mess with manual controls.

WHAT'S THE SUBJECT?

Give people something to latch onto when viewing your photo. As a rule of thumb, close-ups are better.

At a party, for instance, avoid wide shots of random people mingling in a room, as the room becomes the subject - and that's boring. Instead, get close-ups of the guest or two who's laughing or singing. The photo is now about people having fun at a party.

People mingling can still be part of the shot, but in the background, to give people a sense the party's well attended. The same principle applies to parades: It's better to home in on one or two drummers than on the entire marching band, though the rest of the band can still be in the background.

For landscapes, keep in mind that it's tough to give viewers the same sense of grandeur you get from being there in person. But you can nudge viewers by focusing on specific elements, such as mountains or some trees. And of course, if there's wildlife - well, that's your subject.

BEYOND EYE LEVEL

Be willing to crouch down or even lie on the ground to give viewers a fresh perspective. When I encountered a lizard in Singapore, my instinct was to snap while standing up. But the lizard looked generic from that angle and distance. It wasn't until I brought my camera near the ground and get close up did the lizard look ferocious. The good thing about smartphone cameras is that you can change the perspective easily by just lowering the phone.

PLAY AROUND WITH DEPTH

For those obligatory poses next to landmarks, there's no law saying you must actually stand next to the landmark. If the landmark is huge, you'll look tiny by comparison. Why not stand closer to the camera? Since photos are two-dimensional, it'll still look as though you're next to the landmark, but you'll look appropriately sized. You might need to try various depths until you get it right.

CONSIDER THE BACKGROUND

While it's important to have a clear subject in your shot, the background can enhance it by placing the scene in context. I took several shots of people riding elephants in Ayutthaya, Thailand. The ones that stood out had Buddhist stupas in the background. The other shots could have been taken anywhere, such as a local zoo.

WATCH THE LINES

In general, aim for horizontal and vertical lines in shots. For a skyline or a bench, that means taking the shot straight on and avoiding tilt. But diagonal lines can enhance photos at times. For instance, they can lead the eyes outward to give the viewer a greater sense of depth. But make sure you're trying to say something with the diagonal. If the skyline or the bench is tilted, it will just look lazy, not artsy.

THE RULE OF THIRDS

Divide your frame into thirds horizontally and vertically, like a tic-tac-toe board. Some cameras will even draw these lines for you on the screen (but won't include them in the final shot). Ideally, keep your main subjects where those lines intersect, as eyes tend to gravitate there first. If you're shooting a horizon or skyline, have it match one of the imaginary horizontal lines. For shots of people, have the eyes fall along one of those lines.

LIGHTING MATTERS

You'll typically get the best lighting shortly after sunrise or before sunset. During these "golden hours," sunlight is softer, and subjects look better.

But it's not practical to constrain your sightseeing to just a few hours a day. At least try to avoid having the sun shine toward the camera, as that leads to dark subjects. If you can't avoid it, some cameras have an "HDR" mode to help. The camera basically stitches together separate shots of the subject and the background adjusted to different lighting conditions. Turning on the flash - yes, in daytime - can also help light up an otherwise dark subject.

At night, though, you should try to keep the flash off, as light distribution can be intense and uneven. Cameras have gotten much better at low-light shots, such that you're often better off working with ambient light. Bonus tip: Use the flashlight on a friend's phone to add a bit more light to a scene.

KNOW YOUR CAMERA'S LIMITATIONS

While many cameras now have auto-focus, they don't always pick out the subject correctly. If you're shooting with a smartphone, just tap on the intended subject on the screen. This also has the effect of adjusting the exposure to that subject, rather than something in the background you might not care as much about.

And unless you have an iPhone 7 Plus or a Motorola Moto Z with True Zoom, avoid zooming. With most smartphones, you're just getting a fake zoom, also called digital zoom. The image isn't actually getting larger - it's just stretched out like elastic using software. It might be fine on the screen, but it'll look fuzzy blown up on a desktop web browser or printed out for a photo frame.

TECH Q&A

How to fix Windows updates gone awry

By STEVE ALEXANDER
STAR TRIBUNE (MINNEAPOLIS)

Q: I have a Windows 7 laptop from Best Buy that frequently shows the message "This computer is not running genuine Windows." What is causing this, and how can I eliminate it?

A: Some Microsoft software updates examine a PC's copy of Windows to determine if it's legally purchased or illegally copied. But this examination of Windows doesn't always work properly. As a result, some legitimate copies are flagged as illegal, and that triggers the repetitive "not running genuine Windows," message.

You shouldn't ignore the warning, even if it's wrong, because eventually it will appear on your screen all the time. After that, the screen's background color will periodically switch to black.

But there's an easy way to delete the warning. By using the command "REARM," you can reset the "SLMGR" program that manages your Windows software license (and thus is the source of the warning.) This returns your PC to the state it was in before the warning appeared.

This solution helps PC owners with a legitimate copy of Windows, but for those with an illegal copy it only buys a little time. The warning, and its consequences, will reappear each time a new update tests the legality of a PC's copy of Windows.

Go to Start and use the search box to find "cmd" (without the quotation marks.) In the search results, right-click "cmd.exe," and in the resulting menu click "Run as administrator." You will get a black screen with a line of text that begins with "C:\Windows"; at the end of this line is an arrow pointing right. Immediately after the arrow, type "SLMGR -REARM" (don't use the quotation marks, and be sure to leave a blank space before the hyphen.) Click the Enter key, and you will get a screen prompt to restart your PC so that the change will take effect. Click OK.

Q: I keep getting a message to install the important update KB3205972 on my Windows 7 PC. But the update has failed to install 10 times, and I'm unable to remove it from the list of pending updates. What is this update, and what can I do to install it?

A: The update is designed to fix a flaw in the free Microsoft Security Essentials program. The flaw was created by an error in a previous update.

Because this latest update hasn't been a problem for others, I suspect that there's something wrong with the Windows Update program on your PC. Try running the Windows troubleshooting software that finds and fixes problems with the update program (see tinyurl.com/goaqofk).

Q: I'm having my new AOL email forwarded to a Gmail account. Now I'd like to forward my AOL folders, which contain years of emails, and set up new Gmail folders. How can I do that?

A: You can simultaneously transfer your email messages, folders and contacts from AOL to Gmail (see tinyurl.com/gq9yv7d). To set up new Gmail folders (they're called "labels," but they work the same way), see tinyurl.com/hzpfkkk.

Steve Alexander covers technology for the Minneapolis Star Tribune. *Readers may write to him at Tech Q&A, 425 Portland Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn. 55488-0002; email: steve.j.alexander@gmail.com. Please include a full name, city and phone number.*

Life & Style

Actress Debbie Reynolds, 84, dies a day after daughter

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Debbie Reynolds, who lit up the screen in "Singin' in the Rain' and other Hollywood classics despite a tumultuous life, has died a day after losing her daughter, Carrie Fisher. Reynolds was 84.

Her son, Todd Fisher, said Reynolds died Wednesday.

"She's now with Carrie and we're all heartbroken," Fisher said from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where his mother was taken by ambulance earlier Wednesday.

He said the stress of his sister's death on Tuesday "was too much" for Reynolds. Carrie Fisher, who was 60, had been hospitalized since Friday.

"She said, 'I want to be with Carrie,'" her son said. "And then she was gone."

Reynolds enjoyed the heights of show business success and endured the depths of personal tragedy. She lost one husband to Elizabeth Taylor and two other husbands plundered her for millions. Fisher, who found lasting fame as Princess Leia in "Star Wars" and struggled for much of her life with drug addiction and mental health problems, died after falling ill on a plane.

Reaction to Reynolds' death was swift.

"Debbie Reynolds, a legend and my movie mom. I can't believe this happened one day after Carrie," Albert Brooks, who played opposite Reynolds in "Mother," said on Twitter.

"I can't imagine what Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds' family are going through this week. I send all of my love," Ellen DeGeneres tweeted.

Reynolds found superstardom early. After two minor roles at Warner Bros. and three supporting roles at MGM, studio boss Louis B. Mayer cast her in "Singin' in the Rain," despite Kelly's objections. She was 19 with little dance experience, and she would be appearing with two of the screen's greatest dancers, Donald O'Connor and Kelly.

"Gene Kelly was hard on me, but I think he had to be," Reynolds, who more than held her own in the movie, said in a 1999 Associated Press interview. "I had to learn everything in three to six months. Donald O'Connor had been dancing since he was three months old, Gene Kelly since he was 2 years old."

The 1964 Meredith Willson musical "The Unsinkable Molly Brown," with Molly's defiant song "I Ain't Down Yet," brought Reynolds her only Academy Award nomination. She also received a Tony nomination in 1973 for her starring role in the Broadway revival of "Irene," in which her daughter also appeared.

After her transition from starlet to star, Reynolds became popular with teenage girls and even more so when in 1955 she married Eddie Fisher, the pop singer whose fans were equally devoted.

The couple made a movie together, "Bundle of Joy," which seemed to mirror the 1956 birth of Carrie. The Fishers also had a son, Todd, named for Eddie's close friend and Taylor's husband, showman Mike Todd.

During this period, Reynolds had a No. 1 hit on the pop charts in 1957 with "Tammy," the Oscar-nominated song from her film "Tammy and the Bachelor." But the Cinderella story ended after Mike Todd died in a 1958 airplane crash. Fisher consoled the widow and soon announced he was leaving his wife and two children to marry Taylor.

AP

In this May 21, 2013 file photo, actress Debbie Reynolds poses for a portrait in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The celebrity world seemed to lose its mind. Taylor was assailed as a husband stealer, Fisher as a deserter. Reynolds won sympathy as the innocent victim, a role emphasized when she appeared before news cameras with diaper pins on her blouse. A cover headline in Photoplay magazine in late 1958 blared: "Smiling through her tears, Debbie says: I'm still very much in love with Eddie."

Fisher's singing career never recovered, but Reynolds' film career flourished. She starred with Glenn Ford in "The Gazebo," Tony Curtis in "The Rat Race," Fred Astaire in "The Pleasure of His Company," Andy Griffith in "The Second Time Around," with the all-star cast in "How the West Was Won" and Ricardo Montalban in "The Singing Nun."

She also provided the voice of Charlotte in the 1973 animated "Charlotte's Web."

But over the years, her marital woes continued.

In 1960 Reynolds married shoe magnate Harry Karl. The marriage ended in 1973 when she discovered that Karl, a compulsive gambler, had devastated her assets.

Reynolds' third marriage, to Virginia businessman Richard Hamlett in 1984, proved equally disastrous. In 1992, against friends' advice, she paid $10 million to buy and convert a faded Las Vegas hotel into the Debbie Reynolds Hotel and Casino. She performed nightly and conducted tours of her movie memorabilia.

Reynolds, who ended up filing for bankruptcy in 1997 and selling the property at auction the next year, accused Hamlett of making off with her money.

"All of my husbands have robbed me blind," she asserted in 1999. "The only one who didn't take money was Eddie Fisher. He just didn't pay for the children."

In her later years, Reynolds continued performing her show, traveling 40 weeks a year. She also appeared regularly on television, appearing as John Goodman's mother on "Roseanne" and a mom on "Will & Grace." Her books included the memoirs "Unsinkable" and "Make 'Em Laugh."

In 1996 she won critical acclaim in the title role of Albert Brooks' movie "Mother." Reynolds and her daughter were featured together in the HBO documentary "Bright Lights," scheduled for release in 2017.

Mary Frances Reynolds spent the first eight years of her life in Depression-era poverty in El Paso, Texas, where she was born on April 1, 1932. Her father, a carpenter for the Southern Pacific Railroad, was transferred to California and the family settled in Burbank, near Warner Bros. studio.

The girl flourished, winning 48 Girl Scout merit badges, excelling in sports and playing French horn and bass viola in the Burbank Youth Symphony. Girlfriends persuaded her to enter the beauty contest for Miss Burbank, and she won over the judges.

Eventually, she teamed up with Taylor—long since divorced from Fisher—and two other veterans, Joan Collins and MacLaine, for the 2001 TV movie "These Old Broads." The script, co-written by Reynolds' daughter, was about aging, feuding actresses who get together for a reunion show. Reynolds would look back wryly on the Taylor affair, acknowledging that no man could have resisted her and that she actually voted for Taylor when she was up for best actress in 1960. The former romantic rivals had reconciled years before Taylor died in 2011; Reynolds recalled they had both been passengers on the Queen Elizabeth.

"I sent a note to her and she sent a note to me in passing, and then we had dinner together," she told The Huffington Post a few months after Taylor's death. "She was married to Richard Burton by then. I had been remarried at that point. And we just said, 'Let's call it a day.' And we got smashed. And we had a great evening, and stayed friends since then."

Reynolds received an honorary Oscar in 2015, the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award, but was too ill to attend the ceremony. Her granddaughter, actress Billie Lourd, accepted the statuette in her honor.

REACTIONS

Reaction to the death of actress Debbie Reynolds Wednesday at 84, a day after her daughter, Carrie Fisher, died:

■ "Debbie Reynolds, a legend and my movie mom. I can't believe this happened one day after Carrie. My heart goes out to Billie."—Albert Brooks, on Twitter.

■ "Debbie went to be with Carrie. She always worried about her. Carrie left too soon and now they are together again. My heart is literally broken.... An inspiration on every level. A Legend of course, the epitome of clean cut American optimism, dancing with Gene Kelly as an equal, a warrior woman who never stopped working."—Actress Debra Messing, from a lengthy statement on Instagram. Reynolds played Messing's mother on the TV show "Will and Grace."

■ "She was beautiful and generous. It seems like only yesterday she was having lunch here at the house and we were discussing the possibility of working together in a new show." —Carol Channing.

■ "I was blessed to work with this remarkable woman for 45 almost 50 years. That makes for a very rare bond and unique relationship. She was generous to a fault, never caring who got the laugh from the audience. I Will always love her." —Rip Torn, who worked with Reynolds for decades in her Las Vegas stage show.

■ "Truly heartbroken to hear @DebbieReynolds1 has died. She was a wonderfully warm friend and colleague. Praying for Todd & Billie. #RIPDebbie"—Joan Collins on Twitter.

■ "How shocked we were to learn that Debbie Reynolds passed away just a day after her daughter Carrie. I loved & worked both of these icons."—Carl Reiner on Twitter.

■ "I can't imagine what Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds' family are going through this week. I send all of my love."—Ellen DeGeneres on Twitter.

■ "Debbie Reynolds was one of the last of Hollywood Royalty. It breaks my heart that she is gone. I'd hoped that my grieving was done for 2016."—William Shatner on Twitter.

■ "Debbie Reynolds cd sing, dance & gave dazzling performances. RIP doesn't sound right for her or Carrie- I hope they're somewhere having fun"—Mia Farrow, on Twitter.

■ "The loss of #DebbieReynolds 1 day after #CarrieFisher is epic. 2016 has taken a piece of all of us"—Actress Illeana Douglas on Twitter.

■ "A final curtain made of tears #DebbieReynolds #CarrieFisher"—Actress Rose McGowan on Twitter.

■ "Today is officially a sad day. As a mother my heart goes out to Debbie Reynolds and her daughter Carrie Fisher. RIP DB and CF"—Actress Zoe Saldana on Twitter.

■ "The unbearable loss of a child and now this. Rest In Peace Carrie and Debbie, sending our love and prayers to the Fisher, Lord family"—Actress Lisa Rinna on Twitter.

■ "My thoughts and prayers are with the family during this time of unimaginable loss. Two generations in two days."—Chaz Bono on Twitter.

■ "Deepest condolences to the family of Debbie Reynolds. I was just notified of her passing. Such a talented charming lady & a good mother"—Actress Barbara Eden on Twitter.

■ "There is nothing harder than having to bury a child. Debbie died of a broken heart, but she's with her daughter now."—Actor George Takei on Twitter.

■ "Dear Debbie Reynolds, I totally get it. Hug her so tight for all of us."—Actress Alyssa Milano on Twitter.

■ "I can't imagine what kind of pain the family of Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds are feeling right now. My prayers are with them."—Actress Gabourey Sidibe on Twitter.

■ "Let's just cancel the rest of this annus horribilus, have hogmanay now and start 2017 tomorrow. I'm done."—Comedian Craig Ferguson on Twitter.

Mundane items ooze love, loss at failed-relationships museum

LOS ANGELES (AP)—After her husband asked for a divorce, Amber Clisura gave back her engagement ring, kicked him out of the house and tossed everything that reminded her of the ruined marriage. Except for one item: a polished steel barbecue smoker that her future ex-husband had fashioned for her from an old oil drum.

"It sat there on the patio and rusted and rusted, and it became a sad symbol of the relationship," Clisura said.

The four-legged smoker had been a treasured handmade gift, but eventually Clisura couldn't bear to look at it. She considered giving it to a neighbor or selling it for scrap but then read about a call for submissions at the new Los Angeles branch of the Museum of Broken Relationships.

The original museum opened in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2010 after growing out of a touring collection that crisscrossed Europe, Asia and the U.S. On display in Zagreb are artifacts from failed unions, most of them mundane under ordinary circumstances. A single stiletto heel. A wine opener. A worn old Snoopy doll.

But when isolated in a glass case or hanging on a white wall and accompanied by a caption, the objects become imbued with heartache or regret. Or freedom.

In Los Angeles, there's a blue chiffon top a woman wore to a cafe where her husband told her he was leaving. An envelope of leaves mailed from Canada to San Diego so a long-distance paramour could experience changing seasons in Southern California. A jar of pickles purchased for a first love who, the donor explained, "stopped texting before I could give it to him."

After some deliberation, Clisura, a textile artist and fashion designer from LA, decided to donate the smoker and drove it to the museum's warehouse.

"A woman met me downstairs, and as I was handing it over, I burst into tears," Clisura said, laughing now. "It felt like a weight was lifted." The museum representative offered to give her a hug.

Employees have embraced their share of brokenhearted donors eager for closure, said director Alexis Hyde at the museum's location on Hollywood Boulevard, a thoroughfare that, she noted, has been called the "boulevard of broken dreams."

Hyde has been known to brush away her own tears as she opens boxes containing donations.

"It's cathartic the way a good, sad movie is cathartic," she said. "On some level, you know this person's moving on, and they've survived."

Hyde pointed out not all the fizzled unions represented in the 3,500-square-foot museum were romantic. One donor had an irreparable relationship with her father. Another split from a church. A California woman who donated a Texas license plate said she separated from the Lone Star State.

"My broken relationship was with myself," said Andree Vermeulen, whose donated items are the museum's most talked about. The actress sent in a pair of breast implants she had removed after ending a toxic relationship with a man who made disparaging comments about her body.

Vermeulen, who lives in Los Angeles, said the implants "never felt right," and since they've been out, she has "reached a place where I feel very grounded and confident." An outpouring of support on social media gave her further confidence to use the experience as fodder during storytelling performances in which she discusses body image and standards of beauty.

Vermeulen said the donation, now displayed in a glass case in the LA museum's main room, symbolized the final chapter of the relationship, and her scars "mark a story and a time in my life that taught me a lot about myself."

More than 2,000 items comprise the museum's two brick-and-mortar collections and touring shows, which have made stops in San Francisco, Helsinki, Finland and Hamburg, Germany. A show in Seoul, South Korea, featured a donated Jeep that had to be taken apart and brought in by crane. Donations arrive so regularly that the LA site hopes to continually cycle in new items to keep the exhibit fresh.

Donors are anonymous or identified only by first name. They generally write just a few sentences as a backstory, but some items, including a simple green coffee mug at the LA site, come with explanations that go on for hundreds of words.

The caption accompanying a group of old cassette tapes reads: "The music made me dream."

Pieces are displayed across six exhibition rooms in the ground-floor location that lures tourists who stroll Hollywood Boulevard. Visitors pay $18 admission and are encouraged to pop into a private "confessional," where they can write about their own breakups.

Olinka Vistica and Drazen Grubisic, the Croatian artists who conceived the original exhibition on a whim, are shocked by its staying power.

Hyde isn't. "It's so resonant," she said. "The audience is so large for it."

Clisura admitted she hadn't yet been to the museum to see the old rusted smoker.

"I wasn't sure I was ready," she said. But she's since changed her mind and is planning a trip with her new boyfriend.

Amber Clisura poses for a picture next to the meat smoker she donated to the new Museum of Broken Relationships Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2016, in Los Angeles. After her husband asked for a divorce, Clisura gave back her engagement ring, kicked him out of the house and tossed everything that reminded her of the ruined marriage. Except for one item: a polished steel barbecue smoker that her future ex-husband had fashioned for her from an old oil drum. AP

China plans to land probes on far side of moon, Mars by '20

BEIJING (AP)—China vowed Tuesday to speed up the development of its space industry as it set out its plans to become the first country to soft land a probe on the far side of the moon, by around 2018, and launch its first Mars probe by 2020.

"To explore the vast cosmos, develop the space industry and build China into a space power is a dream we pursue unremittingly," read a white paper setting out the country's space strategy for the next five years. It says China aims to use space for peaceful purposes and to guarantee national security, and to carry out cutting-edge scientific research.

The white paper, released by the information office of China's Cabinet, points to the growing ambitions of China's already rapidly advancing space program. China places great emphasis on the development of its space industry, seen as a symbol of national prestige that will raise the country's standing in the world. Although the white paper doesn't mention it, China's eventual goal is to land an astronaut on the moon.

While Russia and the United States have more experience in manned space travel, China's military-backed program has made steady progress in a comparatively short time.

Since China conducted its first crewed space mission in 2003, it has staged a spacewalk and landed a rover on the moon in 2013 - the first time humans had soft landed anything on the moon since the 1970s.

Last month, two astronauts returned from a month-long stay aboard China's Tiangong 2 experimental space station, the country's sixth and longest crewed mission. A fully functioning, permanently crewed space station is on course to begin operations six years from now and is slated to run for at least a decade.

The white paper reiterated China's plans to launch its first Mars probe by 2020, saying it would explore and bring back samples from the red planet, explore the Jupiter system and "conduct research into major scientific questions such as the origin and evolution of the solar system, and search for extraterrestrial life."

The paper says the Chang'e-4 lunar probe will help shed light on the formation and evolution of the moon.

He Qisong, a space security expert at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, said that achieving mankind's first soft landing on the far side of the moon is a newly stated goal. It indicates that China has mastered the underlying technology needed to land on a specific area of the lunar surface, he added.

"China never talks big and says something it's unable to achieve," he said.

Trump inaugural speech to include prayers from prosperity preachers

Two preachers who teach that God will make the faithful rich are among the religious leaders chosen to offer prayers at President-elect Donald Trump's swearing-in, the inaugural committee said Wednesday.

Prosperity gospel preachers Paula White, a friend of Trump's, and Bishop Wayne T. Jackson, whose Detroit church hosted the Republican in September, will be among six faith leaders selected to participate in the Jan. 20 inauguration. It will be the first time preachers who spread the prosperity gospel will be included in the ceremony.

While the faith movement is widely popular, many Christians consider it heretical. Ministers in the tradition often hold up their own wealth as evidence their teachings work. Trump had campaigned in part on his record as a wealthy real estate developer and businessman.

The Senate Finance Committee had investigated White and five other prosperity preachers over their spending, but the inquiry ended in 2011 with no penalty for the televangelists. White said in a statement that she will pray to God at the inaugural "that He would richly bless our extraordinary home, the United States of America."

Anthony Pinn, a Rice University religious studies professor, described the prosperity gospel "as a way to religiously rationalize material acquisition." He said participating in the inaugural gives the preachers a new kind of prominence.

"You've got millions of people who will see them perform," Pinn said. "There's a tremendous amount of benefit that goes along with that."

The four other religious leaders included in the inaugural are the Rev. Franklin Graham, son of the evangelist Billy Graham; Roman Catholic Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York; the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, head of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, an evangelical group; and the Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, which conducts education about the Holocaust and speaks out against anti-Semitism and bias.

The Wiesenthal Center had previously criticized Trump, accusing him of casting suspicion on all Muslims in his remarks on terrorism. Hier said in a phone interview Wednesday that while he would continue to speak out against bigotry, he supports Trump's approach to Israel. "I'm not in the camp of those who say we are now into the dark ages. I think the opposite — that America's best years are ahead of it," Hier said.

Graham, who rallied Christian voters around the country this year over the issue of appointees to the U.S. Supreme Court, has credited God for Trump's win over Hillary Clinton. Rodriguez, who had criticized Trump for his promises to deport millions of people in the country illegally, said Wednesday, "I have enjoyed getting to know President-elect Trump and his team." Rodriguez called participating in the inaugural "a patriotic honor" and "a sacred duty."

Dolan said in a statement he will be reading from Scripture at the inaugural and will ask God to "inspire and guide our new president." ***(AP)***

Brother of JonBenet Ramsey sues CBS for $750M over series

DENVER (AP)—The older brother of JonBenet Ramsey is suing CBS and others for $750 million, saying his reputation was ruined after a television series that concluded he killed his 6-year-old sister two decades ago.

In the lawsuit filed Wednesday, Burke Ramsey claims that the network, its production company and the experts interviewed in the series on the unsolved murder conspired to defame him for publicity and profit. The series, called "The Case of JonBenet Ramsey," aired in September ahead of the 20th anniversary of JonBenet's death.

The beauty pageant star was found dead in the basement of her family's home in Boulder, Colorado, the day after Christmas in 1996. A prosecutor cleared her parents and brother in 2008 based on DNA evidence. But the district attorney currently overseeing the case has said it was premature to exonerate the Ramseys and ordered additional tests using new DNA testing technology that authorities hope will further the investigation.

Police have collected and studied thousands of pieces of evidence and say the case remains open.

In this June 29, 2006, file photo, John Ramsey hugs his son, Burke, facing camera, at the graves of his wife, Patsy, and daughter JonBenet, during services for his wife at the St. James Episcopal Cemetery in Marietta, Ga.

AP

CBS spokesman Dustin Smith declined to comment on the lawsuit, which is the second Burke Ramsey has filed over the television series.

In October, Ramsey, 29, sued a forensic pathologist featured on the show who said he bludgeoned his sister to death. The pathologist is also named in the latest lawsuit, which was filed in Michigan, where Burke Ramsey lives.

The new lawsuit says CBS and its featured experts set out to conduct a "sham reinvestigation" of the murder with "the preconceived the story line" that Ramsey killed his sister and conspired with his parents to cover it up.

"The accusation that Burke Ramsey killed his sister was based on a compilation of lies, half-truths, manufactured information, and the intentional omission and avoidance of truthful information about the murder of JonBenét Ramsey," the lawsuit says.

Fans create star for Carrie Fisher

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Carrie Fisher didn't have a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, so fans have taken over a blank sidewalk star to pay tribute to the late "Star Wars" actress.

Fan Jason Thomas tells news station KNBC-TV Los Angeles that he took it upon himself to make a star for Fisher, who died Tuesday at age 60.

Paste-on letters spell out her name and the phrase "May the force be with you always." Candles and flowers surround the star.

AP

Flowers and candles adorn an impromptu memorial created on a blank Hollywood Walk of Fame star by fans of late actress and author Carrie Fisher, who does not have an official star on the world-famous promenade, in Los Angeles Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2016. Paste-on letters spell out her name and the phrase "May the force be with you always. Hope."

Police, other agencies ramp up security for Rose Parade

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Acknowledging they have learned valuable lessons from this year's terrorist attack in Brussels, authorities said Wednesday they are tightening security at the 128th annual Rose Parade with sturdier barricades and more checkpoints to control cars, as well as numerous other measures, including some they aren't disclosing.

More than 1,000 police officers, including many in plainclothes, and dozens of bomb-sniffing dogs will work the 5 ½-mile parade route, Pasadena police Chief Phillip Sanchez told reporters at City Hall.

"There are no known security threats to the city of Pasadena, to the parade or to the football game," he said. "Nevertheless, we will ensure that aggressive measures are in place to do the best we can to mitigate concerns."

Key among them will be the water-filled barricades that Sanchez said are designed to stop terrorists from racing cars onto the parade route, where hundreds of thousands of people will stand shoulder-to-shoulder Monday to watch a steady stream of marching bands, equestrian units and flower-covered floats.

The route runs through the popular Old Pasadena shopping district, past a community college and under a busy freeway.

Security will be just as tight at the 103rd annual Rose Bowl football game following the parade.

"Vehicles that will be entering the Rose Bowl area will all be scanned," Sanchez said. "Bomb dogs will roam across those vehicles as well."

Officers have been trained to spot suspicious packages in cars, he said, and for weeks police have been working with federal authorities to compile lists of suspicious license plates and vehicles.

People going to the game must pass through metal detectors and can expect delays. Anyone who shows up 10 minutes before it is set to start likely won't see the opening kickoff.

"Arrive early, bring a lot of patience," Sanchez said.

In planning the parade, Pasadena police officials have been working with the FBI, TSA, Secret Service, Homeland Security, ICE and other agencies.

Sanchez said they have studied the deadly terror attack on Brussels in March in which three suicide bombers killed 32 people and injured more than 300 at an airport and train station.

Two suicide bombers carried explosives into the airport in large suitcases and detonated them while another suicide bomber planted explosives on a train.

Authorities said it could take more than just preparation to ensure safety at the Rose Parade and game. Sanchez and others are repeating the security mantra: If you see something suspicious, say something to police.

Couple feels ignored by parent tending to wayward siblings

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I are in our 30s. We do well for ourselves and are generally happy. We both have siblings who have various problems—drug abuse, emotional issues, broken relationships. Our parents pick up and travel to support them during their various dramas, but visit my husband and me only if they need a place to stay and don't want to pay for a hotel.

My parents have cited fear of flying as a reason they don't visit us much, and my husband's parents claim they don't have the money. However, their travel itineraries to visit our siblings suggest otherwise.

I haven't asked my husband's parents about this, but I did ask mine. My mother said that because we're "on a good path," they don't need to see us as often or put as much effort into us. I was shocked. How do we deal with knowing that we're less favored because we have our act together?

THE GOOD KIDS

DEAR GOOD KIDS: You are not the only people with this problem. The same thing tends to happen in families in which there is a child with special needs. The parents expend their energy where they think it is needed most, which often results in hurt and resentment on the part of the stronger siblings.

Perhaps if you view what your mother told you less as a punishment for your success and more as a validation, it will be less hurtful and you will understand the logic. And if you feel you need more time with your parents, go visit THEM.

DEAR ABBY: "Emotional Dad in California" (July 23), whose wife was planning to deliver their child early, was correct. No baby should be electively delivered before 39 weeks gestation. While term gestation is still defined as 37 weeks, current terminology distinguishes early term (37 to 38 weeks), from term (39 to 40 weeks). Data show that not only is the rate of acute complications higher for babies born even at 36 weeks, but each week less than 39 is associated with increasingly lower developmental scores.

In a collaborative effort, organizations dedicated to children's health have spent the last decade trying to reduce the rate of late preterm births, those from 34 to 37 weeks. We have made great inroads in reducing late preterm births, and I am quite certain that getting the word out to your millions of readers could have a positive impact and take us even further. Every baby should have the healthiest start possible, and in the absence of pregnancy complications, that means waiting until 39 weeks.

DAVID H. LEVINE, M.D., COLUMBUS, GA.

DEAR DR. LEVINE: Thank you for this information. I heard from many readers, including neonatologists, labor/delivery nurses, and other professionals certified in maternal and newborn care. They all cited the current position of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) advocating for full-term delivery.

All stated that the final few weeks are important for brain, lung and liver development, vision and hearing, blood sugar regulation, and attaining a healthy birth weight so the baby can stay warm, suck and swallow, and remain awake long enough to be fed. Expectant moms should do as much research as they can in order to give their babies the best chance for the healthiest life.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

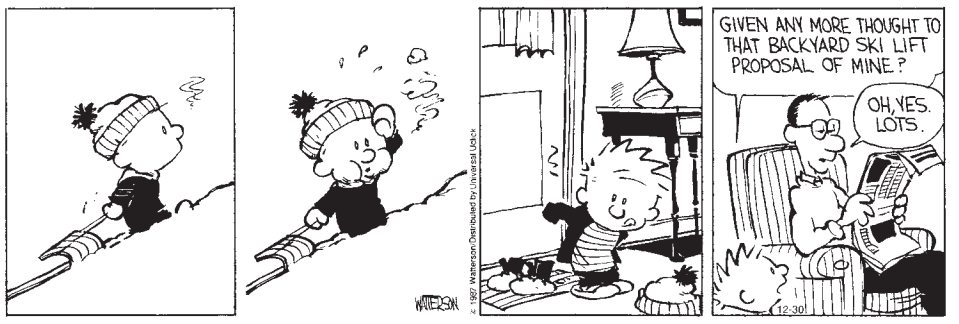
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


GIVEN ANY MORE THOUGHT TO THAT BACKYARD SKI LIFT PROPOSAL OF MINE?
OH, YES. LOTS.
WATERSON
© 1987 Watterson/Distributed by Universal Uclick
12-30

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

READY FOR THE NEW YEAR?!
TOOOOOOOT!
IT HASN'T EVEN STARTED YET, AND I'M READY FOR IT TO BE OVER
JIM DAVIS 12-30
www.facebook.com/garfield
Distributed by Universal Uclick
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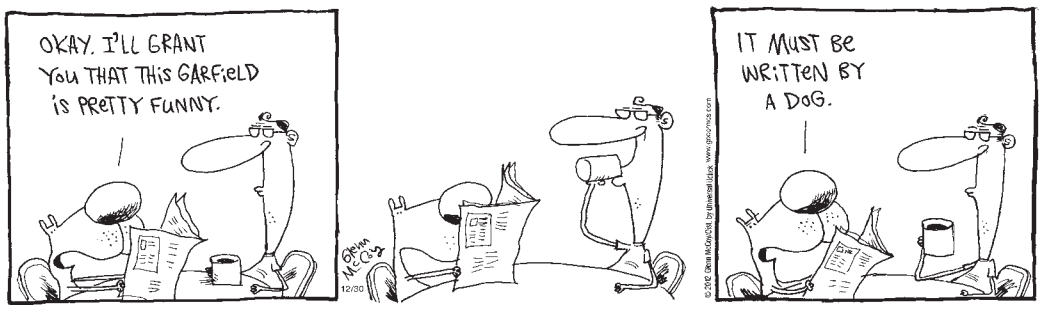
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

SNOWED IN! THIS IS AWESOME!
I KNOW! I LOVE THIS!
I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT HERE AND WATCH MOVIES AND PLAY VIDEO GAMES AND...
SHOULD'VE SEEN THAT COMING.
THIS IS WHEN THE WOLVES COME, ISN'T IT?
©2016 Universal Uclick
www.gocomics.com
MARCEL 12-30

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


OKAY, I'LL GRANT YOU THAT THIS GARFIELD IS PRETTY FUNNY.
IT MUST BE WRITTEN BY A DOG.
GLENN MCCOY
12/30
© 2016 Glenn McCoy/Dist. by Universal Uclick www.gocomics.com

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 PC program
4 Grade-school basics
8 Hoodoo
12 Marseilles monarch
13 Hip
14 "I cannot tell —"
15 Paint the town red
17 Tennis barriers
18 Elevator alternative
19 Hot temper
21 Stick with a kick
22 Architectural style
26 Fishing rods
29 Your
30 — glance
31 Addict
32 Bro's sib
33 Blueprint
34 Ga. neighbor
35 Mensa stats
36 Senses
37 Gift giver's words
39 Vast expanse
40 Single
41 Indiana cagers
45 Barrel
48 A bit baggy, as jeans
50 Dull pain
51 Coagulate
52 Med. plan option
53 Honey bunch?
54 Towel word
55 Antonym (Abbr.)

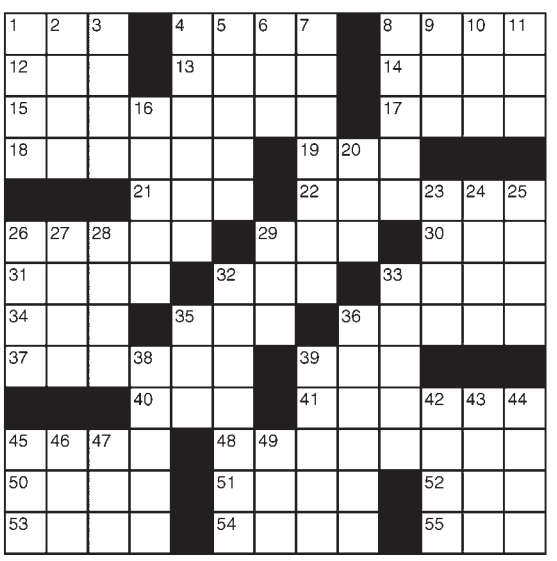
DOWN

1 Curved lines
2 Sulk
3 Pocket bread
4 Squirrel's stash
5 Give a leg up to
6 Lettuce variety
7 Winter vehicles
8 Fed Chair — Yellen
9 — -de-France
10 Petty peeve
11 Ballot marks
16 Metric measure
20 Singer Orbison
23 Robust
24 Slanted type (Abbr.)
25 Axes
26 Magic dragon
27 Norway's capital
28 Tragic king
29 "— the season ..."
32 Crush
33 Quiet partner?
35 Charged bit
36 Banquets
38 Oxen harnesses
39 Animal track
42 Canyon sound
43 Kind of roast
44 Halt
45 Taxi
46 High card
47 That lady
49 World Cup cheer

Solution time: 26 mins.

L	A	M	B	■	P	E	A	S	■	G	M	S
A	L	O	U	■	U	L	N	A	■	O	U	I
G	O	O	D	G	R	I	E	F	■	N	I	P
S	E	N	D	E	R	■	■	E	W	E	R	S
■	■	■	H	E	■	S	P	R	I	G	■	■
Y	O	G	A	■	E	K	E	■	G	I	L	D
U	S	A	■	■	T	A	T	■	■	R	O	E
P	U	G	S	■	A	T	E	■	B	L	O	B
■	■	G	A	B	L	E	■	M	A	■	■	■
P	R	I	M	O	■	■	P	A	L	A	C	E
R	E	F	■	G	O	G	E	T	T	E	R	S
E	N	T	■	U	R	A	L	■	I	R	A	S
Y	D	S	■	S	A	L	T	■	C	O	M	O

Yesterday's answer 12-30



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Eliza Dushku, 36; Laila Ali, 39; Tiger Woods, 41; Matt Lauer, 59.

Happy Birthday: Hold everything together. Strategize until you are sure you have left nothing to chance. Propagate, produce and pay close attention to detail. The foundation you put in place now will determine how far you will go and how fast you will get there. Maintain a clear picture of what you want to achieve, and refuse to let anyone confuse you. Your numbers are 7, 12, 20, 23, 31, 33, 42.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Keep your life simple. Don't let the little things get to you or overreact to situations that will only get worse if you make a fuss. Stay focused on positive changes and close out the year with someone you love. ✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Your intuition will not let you down. Check out online job opportunities and you will discover a position that you are qualified to do and that offers growth and longevity. It's out with the old and in with the new. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't make a snap decision while under emotional duress. It's best to let whatever situation you face run its course before you try to intervene. Focus on personal improvements and romance. Don't allow yourself to get too distracted. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Don't make a snap decision when dealing with money matters, flash sales and unnecessary purchases. Lending, borrowing or letting someone talk you into making a donation will result in regret. Focus on saving, not letting someone guilt you into spending. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Short trips will be enlightening. The people you meet will offer options you hadn't considered in the past and will help you embrace the future with a renewed faith in what you have to offer and how you present your skills. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Take a different approach to the way you deal with domestic and personal relationship issues. If you draft a plan and offer incentives to get things done, success will be yours. Intuition will prove valuable when dealing with personal matters. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Be careful how you handle partnerships. Letting your emotions take over will lead to disputes that will have you questioning what to do next. Take a break and use the time to mull over the past. Trust your intuition. ✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Refrain from making unrealistic promises. Choose to do what works best for you and you will have an impact on the people you care about most. A gathering at your place will give you insight into how others perceive you. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't worry about what's going on around you. Stick to your strategy, especially when it involves your home, possessions and financial matters. Trust in what you know you can do and don't stop until you reach your destination. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Keep an open mind and a clear head. Taking what others say or do to heart will only lead to confusion. Rely on your own effort, experience and knowledge when it comes to important decisions. Avoid excess and indulgence. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Emotional spending will be your downfall. Be careful how you handle situations concerning institutions. Medical, legal and financial dealings must be kept up-to-date. Don't wait or hesitate when you should be living in the moment. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Someone you least expect will make you an offer. Before you accept, consider whether ulterior motives are involved and find out more about what's required and expected of you. Negotiate and get what you want in writing. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, curious and natural. You are punctual and hardworking.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			3			8		
		5						
9				4	1		3	
		7	6		4			9
		6		8		5		
8			2		9	1		
	7		9	2				4
						6		
		4			8			

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/30

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

1	4	9	5	3	7	2	6	8
6	7	2	8	9	4	1	5	3
3	8	5	6	2	1	4	9	7
7	5	8	2	4	3	6	1	9
2	9	3	1	6	5	7	8	4
4	6	1	7	8	9	3	2	5
5	3	6	9	7	2	8	4	1
8	1	4	3	5	6	9	7	2
9	2	7	4	1	8	5	3	6

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/29

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

CHEWABLE TABLETS **Solution: 8 letters**

L	L	L	R	I	B	O	F	L	A	V	I	N	Y	E
A	A	A	E	Y	R	A	T	E	I	D	D	T	G	V
R	X	C	B	E	S	A	Y	H	E	A	L	A	R	I
U	A	T	I	V	S	T	E	S	T	D	S	K	E	T
T	T	A	F	T	I	O	R	I	L	O	I	E	N	A
A	I	I	E	U	U	T	C	A	D	L	O	B	E	N
N	V	D	R	S	S	E	A	U	W	A	I	T	L	R
E	E	F	F	O	C	E	C	M	L	B	I	P	S	E
S	N	M	U	I	D	O	S	A	I	G	E	L	O	T
E	T	Z	I	N	C	L	O	O	M	N	R	R	Y	L
I	K	S	Y	D	N	A	C	R	I	R	Ⓢ	A	R	A
R	C	V	A	M	I	N	E	R	A	L	A	Ⓐ	P	Y
R	U	A	L	L	E	R	G	Y	E	L	S	H	Ⓛ	E
E	S	O	R	C	U	S	W	A	L	L	O	W	P	Ⓣ
B	L	E	N	D	S	C	I	T	O	I	B	O	R	P

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Allergy, Alternative, Berries, Blends, Candy, Coffee, Daily, Dietary, Dosage, Edible, Energy, Enzymes, Fiber, Fruity, Glucose, Grape, Heal, Lactaid, Lasts, Laxative, Mineral, Natural, Oils, Oral, Pharmaceutical, Pills, Probiotics, Riboflavin, Salt, Sodium, Strawberry, Suck, Sucrose, Swallow, Take, Taste, Test, Tooth, Uses, Vitamins, Zinc

Yesterday's Answer: Pacioli

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670-7897725

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(3) WAITRESS
2-3 years experience as a waitress in a Night Bar or an Entertainment Business
Salary: $ 6.55 per hour

Other Qualifications:
- At least 21-25 years old with pleasing personality
- Full time with flexible working hours
- Preferably can speak Japanese language fluently

(3) GENERAL MAINTENANCE
Salary: $ 6.55 per hour

Qualifications:
- At least 2-3 years experience as a Commercial Building Maintenance. Preferably in Carpentry and Masonry
- Full time with flexible working hours

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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 07-2016

Opening date: December 28, 2016 **Closing date: January 13, 2017**

Positions: (2) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee (Rota)
(1) General Maintenance-I (Saipan)
(1) ARFF Trainee (Saipan)
(1) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee (Tinian)
(1) Rota Ports Manager
(1) Vessel Traffic Controller (Saipan)

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10 year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office is no later than **4:30 p.m., Friday, January 13, 2017**.

Detailed information on qualifications and position description for the above positions shall be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except on holidays, at the CPA's Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at cpa.personnel@pticom.com or by phone at (670) 237-6500.

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Executive Director

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Classified Ads

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REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

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Butler scores 40, buzzer-beater lifts Bulls over Nets

CHICAGO (AP)—Jimmy Butler matched his season high with 40 points and hit an 18-footer at the buzzer roughly five minutes after being helped off the court with an apparent injury Wednesday night to give the Chicago Bulls a 101-99 comeback victory over the Brooklyn Nets.

Butler scored nine points in the final 2 1/2 minutes to rally Chicago. He finished 11 for 11 from the free throw line and grabbed 11 rebounds as the Bulls overcame a seven-point deficit in the final three minutes for their second consecutive win.

With just more than five minutes left, Butler came down on the foot of Brooklyn guard Randy Foye and had to be helped off the court.

Dwyane Wade had 16 points before leaving early in the fourth quarter with a migraine.

Brook Lopez had 33 points—including a career-high five 3-pointers—as the Nets dropped their 12th straight road game.

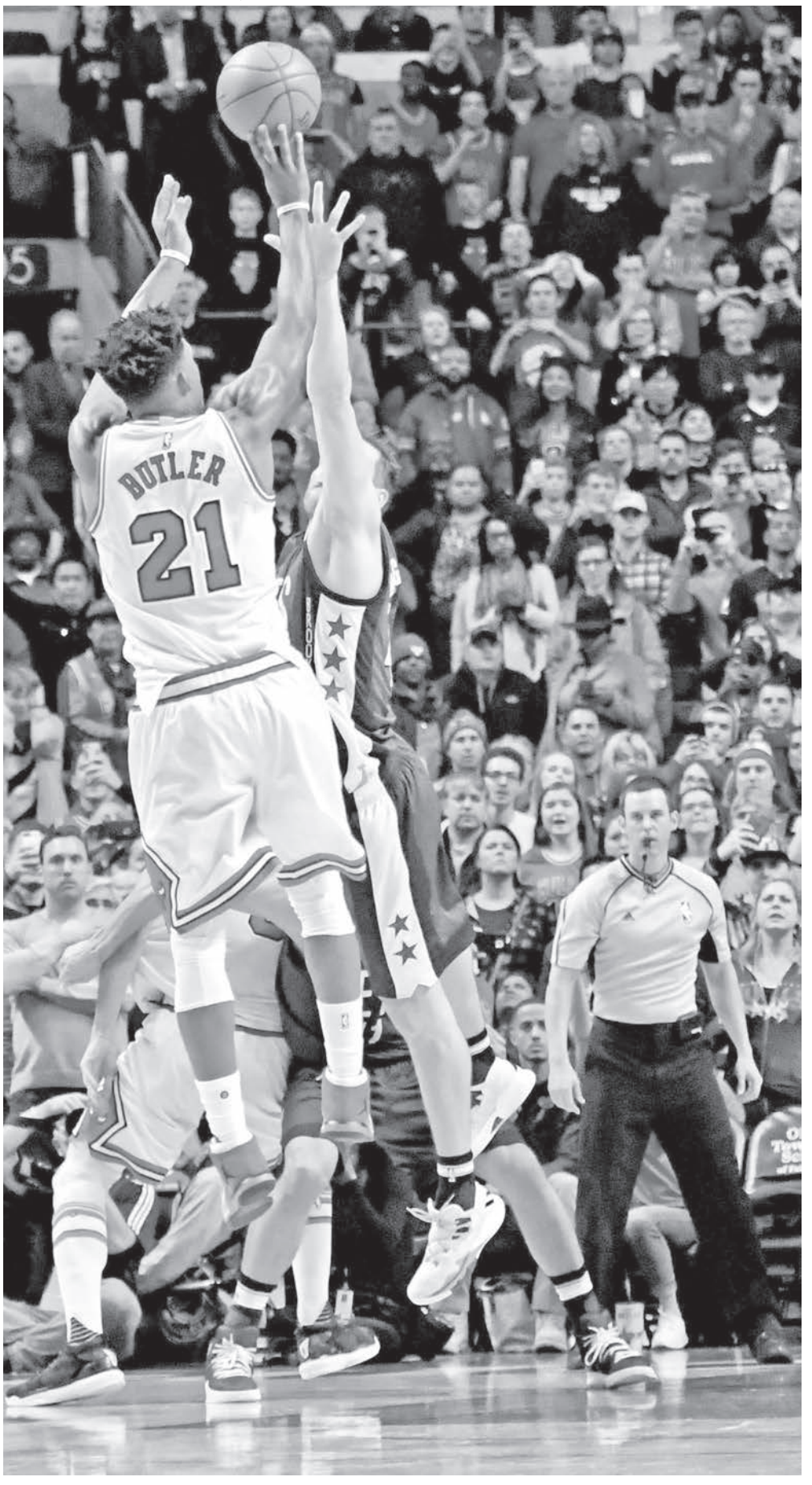
Lopez had 19 first-half points to spark Brooklyn to a 49-46 halftime lead. The 7-footer was 4 for 5 on 3-pointers in the first 24 minutes and celebrated by holding up three fingers as he ran down the court following each one.

Brooklyn had a 97-90 lead with just more than two minutes to play and appeared headed for a comfortable win, but Chicago stormed back. Michael Carter-Williams tied the game at 97 with 1:22 left.

It was his first basket since returning Monday from a nearly two-month absence because of injuries to his left knee and wrist. He had missed his first 10 field goal attempts.

Following a Nets turnover, Butler gave the Bulls their first lead of the second half with a 15-footer with 27.7 seconds to go. Lopez, though, tied it with 12.6 seconds left on a dunk over his brother, Robin Lopez.

That set the stage for Butler.



AP

Chicago Bulls forward Jimmy Butler (21) scores the game-winning basket while being defended by Brooklyn Nets guard Bojan Bogdanovic (44) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2016, in Chicago.

Warriors 121, Raptors 111

In Oakland, Calif., Kevin Durant scored 22 points and matched his season best with 17 rebounds as Golden State held off Toronto.

Stephen Curry had 28 points, seven assists and seven rebounds, and Klay Thompson scored 21 for the Warriors. Durant also had seven assists and five blocks.

Upset with themselves for blowing a 14-point lead in the fourth quarter to lose 109-108 at Cleveland in an NBA Finals rematch on Christmas, the Warriors took it out on Toronto three days later.

DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points and became Toronto's career scoring leader (10,290), passing Chris Bosh's 10,275 points. But the Raptors had their franchise-record, seven-game road winning streak snapped.

Golden State has gone 119 straight regular-season games without losing back-to-back contests since April 2015 and has won 15 in a row after a defeat, going 5-0 this season.

Spurs 119, Suns 98

In San Antonio, LaMarcus Aldridge scored 27 points and San Antonio defeated Phoenix without leading scorer Kawhi Leonard.

After trailing by as many as 10 points, San Antonio forced seven turnovers while outscoring Phoenix 30-16 in the final quarter to capture its sixth straight win at home.

Tony Parker added 20 points and Pau Gasol had 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, who played without Leonard for the first time this season. The 6-foot-7 forward, who had a stomach virus, was replaced in the lineup by Kyle Anderson.

T.J. Warren led the Suns with 23 points.

Pelicans 102, Clippers 98

In New Orleans, Anthony Davis highlighted a 20-point performance with a soaring, one-handed, alley-oop dunk during a pivotal fourth-quarter spurt, and the suddenly surging New Orleans Pelicans beat Los Angeles.

Buddy Hield scored 17 points for the Pelicans, who have won three straight. Reserve guard Tyreke Evans added a season-high 12 in his sixth game back from a right knee injury.

Chris Paul returned from a three-game absence and scored 21 points against his old team, but couldn't quite lift the Clippers out of their funk. Los Angeles has lost four straight.

Austin Rivers had 22 points for Los Angeles, and DeAndre Jordan pulled down 25 rebounds.

Hawks 102, Knicks 98, OT

In Atlanta, Dennis Schroder scored 27 points, Dwight Howard added 16 points and 22 rebounds, and Atlanta took advantage of Carmelo Anthony's second-quarter ejection to beat New York in overtime.

Derrick Rose finished with 26 points for New York, but the star point guard fell as he was dribbling near the Knicks' basket and lost his footing with 6 seconds left in overtime and Atlanta leading by one.

Schroder followed with a pair of free throws to make it 100-97. Kristaps Porzingis, who scored 24 points, was fouled as he shot a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession, but made just one of three free throws to end the suspense.

The Hawks had lost three straight and six of seven at home. They are 7-14 since beginning the season 9-2.

Atlanta didn't trail again in overtime after Thabo Sefolosha hit a 3 to make it 89-88 with 3:54 left.

Hornets 120, Magic 101

In Orlando, Fla., Kemba Walker scored 21 points, Nicolas Batum had 20 and Charlotte used a huge third quarter to rout Orlando.

Jeremy Lamb added 14 points and Ramon Sessions scored 13 off the bench as the Hornets won for the fourth time in five games. Charlotte shot 54.8 percent, including 10 of 24 on 3-pointers.

Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 21 points and Serge Ibaka had 20, all in the first half.

Batum nearly had a triple-double with nine rebounds and eight assists, but wasn't needed in the fourth quarter when both teams emptied their benches. Charlotte outscored Orlando 35-13 in the third to break open a close game.

Wizards 111, Pacers 105

In Washington, John Wall had 36 points and 11 rebounds, and Washington held off Indiana despite playing the second half without Bradley Beal.

Otto Porter Jr. added 22 points for the Wizards, and Wall finished one assist shy of his first triple-double this season. Beal, who sprained his right ankle in the first quarter, had 12 points in 18 minutes.

Paul George scored 34 and Jeff Teague added 19 points and 11 assists for the Pacers, who trailed by 11 after three quarters and cut the deficit to two late in the fourth.

Marcin Gortat had 13 points and 16 rebounds for Washington.

The Wizards are 8-3 in their last 11 games, and have won seven straight at home. They're within a game of .500 for the first time since losing their opener en route to a 2-8 start.

Indiana has lost four straight since beating Washington on Dec. 19.

Bucks 119, Pistons 94

In Auburn Hills, Mich., Jabari Parker scored 31 points and Giannis Antetokuompo had 23 points and eight rebounds as Milwaukee beat Detroit.

Greg Monroe added 14 points, six assists and five rebounds against his former team to help the Bucks win for the second time in five games.

Tobias Harris had 23 points and 12 rebounds off the bench for Detroit, which has dropped six of seven. The Pistons ended a five-game losing streak Monday with a win over the Cleveland Cavaliers, who rested LeBron James, but weren't competitive against visiting Milwaukee.

Nuggets 105, Timberwolves 103

In Denver, Wilson Chandler scored 17 points and delivered a key block in the final seconds, helping Denver hang on to beat Minnesota.

The Nuggets overcame a triple-double by Karl-Anthony Towns, who had 15 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for the Timberwolves.

Danilo Gallinari scored 18 points, including the go-ahead basket with 27 seconds left, and Nikola Jokic was two rebounds shy of a triple-double for the Nuggets. He finished with 16 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds.

Andrew Wiggins had 25 points for the Timberwolves, and Gorgui Dieng added 20. Zach LaVine just missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Trail Blazers 102, Kings 89

In Portland, Ore., CJ McCollum scored 20 points and Portland snapped a six-game losing streak with a victory over Sacramento.

Meyers Leonard added 16 off the bench for the Trail Blazers, who played without leading scorer Damian Lillard for the second straight game because of a sprained left ankle.

DeMarcus Cousins scored 28 points but the Kings had their four-game winning streak snapped.

Mason Plumlee finished with 12 points and 14 rebounds for Portland.

Sacramento was without Rudy Gay because of a right hip flexor strain.

Rodgers-to-Nelson: Packers' prolific duo is on a roll

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)—Aaron Rodgers and Jordy Nelson have worked with each other so long that it often seems they can create plays just by making eye contact.

Nelson points to where he thinks he can make a catch. Rodgers buys precious seconds and delivers a pinpoint pass.

Another big play for the Green Bay Packers.

The prolific duo is on a roll headed into the Packers' winner-take-all showdown on Sunday against the Lions in Detroit for the NFC North title.

"You can see the trust," coach Mike McCarthy said. "He releases the ball much earlier to Jordy and that in itself speaks volumes of their relationship as far as the number of reps, the trust, the timing and so forth. They're a unique combination."

Nelson entered the league as a second-round draft choice out of Kansas State in 2008, which was Rodgers' first year taking over as the starting quarterback.

Since then, they have combined to become the most productive quarterback-receiver touchdown combination in Packers history, breaking the mark of 57 held by Brett Favre and Antonio Freeman. Two more touchdown passes last week against Minnesota gave the Rodgers and Nelson 59.

Nelson has five scoring catches over the past four weeks, a period during which Rodgers has been dealing with leg muscle injuries.

AP

In this Dec. 11, 2016, file photo, Green Bay Packers' Aaron Rodgers congratulates Jordy Nelson after a touchdown catch during the second half of an NFL football game against the Seattle Seahawks, in Green Bay, Wis.

And yet Rodgers is in the midst of what has been a late-season-charge—his most impressive stretch of the season—for the Packers (9-6), having not thrown an interception over his past six games. Green Bay has won five straight since a four-game skid.

Bad news for the Lions: Rodgers said on Wednesday after practice that his sore right calf is improving.

"It's nice to be feeling a lot better. My injuries have definitely subsided, the rehab has continued but I'm healing up at the right time," Rodgers said.

Packers offensive coordinator Edgar Bennett has taken to giving Rodgers the nickname "Yellow Jacket," after the color of the sport coat that retired players wear when inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

"I'm just looking for new ways to compliment him," McCarthy said. "I think if you just have a chance to be around him every day, he competes with everything. It can be overwhelming sometimes as far as whether it's pre-practice drill or finishing his test before the other guys."

Bills have interim coach and interim starting QB: EJ Manuel

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)—Aside from having an interim head coach in Anthony Lynn, the Buffalo Bills also have an interim starting quarterback: EJ Manuel.

Without going into detail, Lynn called it "a business decision" to start Manuel in place of Tyrod Taylor in Buffalo's season finale against the New York Jets on Sunday. Both teams are eliminated from playoff contention.

Lynn, who doubles as the team's offensive coordinator, also revealed on Wednesday that he had little—if any input—in making the quarterback switch made a day after Rex Ryan was fired.

In first saying it was "our decision," Lynn later said he "wasn't in the room," when the decision was made. He then added he can't speak for general manager Doug Whaley or owner Terry Pegula.

As for whether he had a preference over who starts, Lynn said the team wants to gauge its depth at quarterback with Manuel being the next in line.

The switch continues to raise questions over Taylor's future beyond this season.

Despite signing a lucrative five-year extension and restructuring the final season of his contract in August. The Bills can opt out of the deal after this season, but it's unclear if they would still have that flexibility if Taylor sustains a long-term injury.

Manuel is 6-10 as a starter, and completing the final year of his contract since being selected in the first round of the 2013 draft.

Bucs RB Martin suspended, entering drug treatment facility

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Tampa Bay running back Doug Martin has been suspended four games for violating the NFL's policy on performance enhancing substances and said Wednesday he's entering a treatment facility rather than appeal the ban.

The two-time Pro Bowl selection, slowed by a hamstring injury this season after rushing for 1,402 yards in 2015, will miss Sunday's regular-season finale against Carolina.

He also sat out last week's 31-24 loss at New Orleans after being declared inactive against the Saints, though that game won't count against the penalty.

Martin said in a statement that he learned of the suspension last week and that his "initial instinct" was to "appeal the suspension and finish the season with my teammates."

The fifth-year pro said he decided to enter a treatment facility "and receive the help I truly need" after discussing the matter with people close to him, including Bucs coach Dirk Koetter.

"On the field, I must be strong and determined to push through both pain and injuries to become an elite NFL running back.

"Off the field, I have tried that same approach in my personal life," Martin said in the statement released through the team. "My shortcomings in this area have taught me both that I cannot win these personal battles alone and that there is no shame in asking for help."

The 27-year-old running back was excused from practice Wednesday.

Afterward, Koetter declined to comment on his situation, saying a statement from the player would be forthcoming.

The NFL said Martin was suspended for the team's "next four regular-season and/or postseason games," beginning immediately.

"Doug has been a valued member of our organization for the past five seasons and we respect and support his decision to seek help," Bucs general manager Jason Licht said.

"Right now, he is working through issues that are much larger than the game of football," Licht added.

"Our primary concern is that he takes this time to focus on getting the help that he needs in order to move forward with his personal and professional life."

The announcement came four days after the Bucs declared what Koetter described as a healthy Martin inactive for a game Tampa Bay needed to win to retain realistic playoff hopes.

Sweet sweep for MOC paddlers

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Marianas Outrigger Club's men's team made history in this year's Micronesian Cup held in the waters off Meyuns Seaplane Ramp in Koror, Palau.

MOC's paddlers swept all three events in their division—a first for any CNMI team that joined the Micro Cup.

The Dino Manning-captained MOC ruled the 500m and 1,500m sprints and the long-distance race, defeating teams from host Palau, Guam, Hong Kong, and another CNMI squad Saipan Paddling Club. MOC's winning crewmembers were Jose Quan, Vince Tudela, Bobby Cruz, Rich Salas, Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel, Billy Grow, Angel San Nicolas, and James Lee.

Napu Outrigger Canoe Club also competed in the Micro Cup, fielding three youth teams, which returned to the islands victorious, too.

Napu's youth paddlers recorded Top 3 finishes in the junior mix 500m, 1,500m, and long-distance course. The club's youth team was composed of Ryan Aguon, Brandon Cabrera, Kyle Reyes, Sammy Litulumar, Leon Laniyo, Hekido Helgen, Daven Hocog, Raven Igisaiar, Daydra Hocog, Isabel Ito, Julianna Hanson, Rika Diaz, Jewel Cubangbang, Dhalian Salas, Camille Muna, Rachel Tudela, Leisha Guerrero Mendiola, and Mayiah Duenas, while Jason Tarkong was the coach.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Marianas Outrigger Club paddlers gather for a photo before their races in the Micro Cup 2016 held in the waters off Meyuns Seaplane Ramp in Koror, Palau.

Track facility resurfacing starts

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Finally, after more than two years, the Oleai Sports Complex's track and field facility got its much-needed facelift.

The track resurfacing work began early this month, thanks to the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. for allocating NMSA Program Year 2014 CDBG Funds in the amount of $772,368 and Program Year 2015 CDBG Funds in the amount of $132,744 for the project. The Marianas Visitors Authority also chipped in $250,000 for the improvement of the facility. Northern Marianas Sports Association, through its executive director Tony Rogolifoi and vice president Kurt Barnes, coordinated the project and worked closely with the government agencies in finding funds for the resurfacing work.

Tang's Corp. is the contractor for the project, which should be done after 150 days since the notice to proceed was released last Nov. 15.

The eight-lane track facility has to regain its Level II certification from the International Association of Athletics Federations for the CNMI to host international and regional competitions and prepare the Commonwealth for its hosting of the Pacific Mini Games in 2021.

Other facilities at the sports complex will also undergo repair work after funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency through the Capital Improvement Projects were also approved this year.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Tang's Corp. employees removing the rubberized surface of the Oleai Sports Complex's track and field facility check on the payloader before resuming their work.

International exposure, training for national soccer teams

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The CNMI's Trey Dunn, second left, and Chinese-Taipei's Sheng-Yi Liu try to hold each other down as they battle for possession during their game in the EAFF E-1 Football Championships 2017 Round 1 at the Guam Football Association National Training Center in Dededo.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Northern Marianas Islands Football Association, through the help of the Asian Football Confederation and the East Asian Football Association, continued to provide CNMI national teams opportunities to get better and keep up with their counterparts.

This year, the Commonwealth's national players (adults and youths) joined six off-island tournaments, went to training camps in California and Japan, and played several training matches against visiting Japanese teams.

In May, the CNMI Girls U14 National Team challenged powerhouse teams Japan, South Korea, and China in the AFC U14 Girls Regional Championships held at the Xianghe Football Training Center in Beijing.

A month later, the Commonwealth's men's and women's squads played in the EAFF E-1 Football Championships 2017 Round 1 at the Guam Football Association National Training Center in Dededo. The men's crew dueled Macau, Chinese-Taipei, and Mongolia, while the women's team played against Guam and Macau.

Before the EAFF competition in Guam, some members of the Blue Ayuyus were in San Diego for a five-day training camp under NMIFA technical director and CNMI head coach Kiyoshi Sekiguchi.

The Commonwealth's players (girls U16 team members) also went to Weifang, China in August for the AFC U-16 Women's Championships 2017 Qualifier and they squared off against the Philippines, Malaysia, India, and South Korea.

A few days after the conclusion of the U16 tournament, focused was shifted to the CNMI U14 Boys National Team that joined the AFC U14 Regional (East) Festival of Football 2016 in Xianghe National Football Training Center in Beijing and won the Fair Play Award.

The CNMI was back in China for less than a month, as its U19 women's team competed in the AFC U19 Women's Championship 2017 Qualifier in Nanjing, against Australia and Jordan.

Meanwhile, the CNMI Boys U17 National Team did not have an off-island tournament, but went to Japan last month for a training camp, while the same squad and other youth teams had training matches against five Japanese crews that visited Saipan early this year.

Sports tourism thriving

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Local sports federations and the Marianas Visitors Authority worked together in bringing visitors to the island and having them compete in various tournaments.

The Saipan Marathon drew the most off-island athletes in 2016 with over 300 runners spread out in 10K, half marathon, marathon, and ultra marathon races. More than 500 joined the annual event held in April.

A month before the Saipan Marathon, the island also hosted the XTERRA Saipan Championship and Tagaman Triathlon that lured pros and amateur triathletes from Korea, China, Taiwan, Australia, Philipines, Switzerland, Guam, Russia, and Japan.

More Japanese tourists/athletes come to Saipan in September to participate in the 2nd Annual Plumeria Swim held at Kilili Beach, while the season-ending Hell of Marianas Century Cycle Race featured more visiting athletes.

Other Saipan-hosted tournaments that drew off-island participants were the Saipan Swim Club International Invitational Swim Meet and the 2016 Settsu-Saipan Friendship Basketball Tournament.

JON PEREZ
Chinese runners from the Anbu Town SPARK Long-distance Running Team hold hands as they near the finish line of the 2016 Saipan Marathon.

CNMI to have its own artificial turf

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

What has started as a dream several years ago is slowly becoming a reality as the CNMI will soon have its own artificial soccer turf.

The NMI Soccer Training Center broke ground in October with no less than Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and Northern Mariana Islands Football Association president Jerry Tan leading the ceremony.

The facility will be built in a 48,000-square meter lot in Koblerville and will house the NMIFA office, covered bleachers, locker rooms, rest rooms, a conference room, and ample parking lots. NMIFA pegged the cost of creating the facility between $1.5 and $2 million. No government funds will be used to construct NMI Soccer Training Center as NMIFA will work on its on-island and off-island donors to complete the project, which may be done by July next year.

Once done, the facility will be used for trainings and games of clubs and national teams and can also host off-island squads, bringing additional tourists to the island.

JON PEREZ
From left, NMIFA general secretary Ross Zapanta, NMIFA vice president Vickie Izuka, NMSA president Michael White, Soccer.com president Nobuyuki Yamagata, NMIFA president Jerry Tan, Pacific Games Council president Vidhya Lakhan, first lady Diann Torres. Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan, and Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Secretary Robert Hunter participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

SSC, Tsunami swimmers set records

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Twelve CNMI age group records fell this year.

Saipan Swim Club's Lennosuke Suzuki was the first to set a new mark in 2016 after posting 28.13 seconds in the 2016 SSC Pentathlon Meet in February, surpassing the 28.16 seconds Joshua Taitano registered on May 6, 1994 in the boys 11 to 12 division.

The SSC swimmer then got two three marks during the 2016 SSC International Invitational Meet in March—1:01.48 in the 100m freestyle, 2:17.20 in the 200m freestyle, and 2:34.15 in 200m individual medley.

In May, the now Guam-based Miku Tammy of Tsunami Saipan had a fitting farewell as she earned a record in the 50m butterfly (32.33 seconds) in the girls 13 to 14 age group during the NMISF Closing Swim Meet for the 2015-206 season.

At the start of the 2016-2017 season in October, it was the turn of Lennosuke's brother, Jinnosuke, to post a record. Jinnosuke established new marks in 100m (1:06.93) and 200m freestyle (2:24.58) in the boys 9 to 10 age group.

Tsunami Saipan's Isaiah Aleksenko joined the same opening meet and registered the new record in the 50m freestyle (30.68 seconds) in the similar age group. Aleksenko also crushed two more marks in his division after timing in at 5:08.50 in the 400m freestyle and 10:34.52 in the 800m freestyle during the NMISF Meet 3 held early this year.

Aleksenko's fellow Tsunami swimmers Nanaka Watanabe and Juhn Tenorio had record-breaking swims, too. Watanabe posted new marks in the girls 9 to 10's 100m breaststroke (1:30.91) and 50m breaststroke (41.63 seconds), while Tenorio's record came in the 50m backstroke (33.56 seconds) in the boys 11 to 12 division.

Tsunami Saipan's Ashley Dangol missed the local age group records this season since she moved up to the higher age group, but set a new mark in the Tokyo Junior Sprint 2016. She timed in at 33.93 seconds in the 50m butterfly to eclipse the 33.95 Michiko Shimokawa of Tokyo Swimming Center set in 2002 in the girls 9-year-old division of the event.

Besides Dangol, five more CNMI swimmers saw action in international tournaments this year. In June Victoria Chentsova, Salofi Welch, Christian Villacrusis, and Lennosuke Suzuki represented the CNMI in the XI Oceania Championships in Fiji. Then early this month, Villacrusis and Welch joined Angel De Jesus on the CNMI Team that competed in the 13th FINA World Swimming Championships in Windsor, Canada.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Saipan Swim Club's Lennosuke Suzuki does the butterfly stroke of the 200m individual medley event in the SSC Pentathlon Meet held at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

Lee rises; Tan, Heras gain rankings

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The CNMI's Carol Lee barged into the Top 500 world rankings in the Juniors ITF.

Lee, who started the season at No. 748, climbed to No. 443 in July this year, making her the highest ranked female player in the entire Pacific. She owned the second best world ranking among the CNMI players, just a few notches behind former junior netter Ji Hoon Heo, who was ranked No. 440 in 2010. As of Dec. 26, 2016, Lee is still in the Top 500 (No. 470) after earning combined 117.5 (singles and doubles) ranking points.

The Commonwealth bet got 105 ranking points in singles and 50 in doubles. Lee, who was just 14 years old when she played against a bunch of 18 year old players in Juniors ITF tournaments this year, posted a 19-8 record in singles this season and 9-7 in doubles, while her career records are listed at 27-15 (singles) and 13-14 (doubles).

Lee gained more ranking points this year after making it to the finals of the singles event of the Open Junior BNP PARIBAS de Nouvelle-Caledonie in New Caledonia and Oceania Open Junior Championships in Fiji.

Tania Tan and Isabel Heras joined the same tournament in New Caledonia and together they won their first round match to get ranking points for the first time. Tan and Heras were awarded with five ranking points apiece for prevailing in their doubles game against Australia's Luciana Kunkel and Mia Savio, 7-6 (4), 6-3.

The victory put the two CNMI players at the No. 2,212 spot in the world rankings. Tan was ranked as high as No. 2,200 and is at No. 2,448 at press time. Heras, on the other hand, rose to as high as No. 1,878 as she got two more doubles wins (with American Bryn Johnson in the Oceania Open Junior Championships and Kunkel in the Oceania Closed Junior Championships). With 30 doubles ranking points and combined 7.5, she is now at No. 1,971.

Finest junior tennis players

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
CNMI junior tennis team players and coach Jeff Race pose for a photo at the departure area of the Francisco C. Ada-Saipan International Airport last August before leaving for Fiji to compete in the 2016 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships.

The CNMI Junior Tennis Team had an outstanding showing in the Pacific Oceania Junior Championships this year.

The Jeff Race-coached squad collected four titles—the most by any nation that competed in the annual tournament in Fiji. The Commonwealth defeated favored and perennial first placer Tahiti and the 12 other island-nations in the race for the most championships in the POJC. Tahiti had three titles, while Fiji and Vanuatu got two each.

Carol Lee delivered two crowns for the CNMI with her victory in the girls U16 singles and in the doubles where she partnered with Isabel Heras. Robbie Schorr duplicated Lee's feat as he triumphed in the boys U14 singles and doubles (with Ken Song).

Besides the four first place finishes, Race's wards also took two runner-up honors with Ji Min Woo and Seung Jin Paik and Conatsu Kaga and Malika Miyawaki advancing to the finals of the boys U12 and girls U14 divisions, respectively.

The CNMI's success in the POJC came after it dominated anew the 2016 North Pacific Regional Championships held on Saipan two months earlier.

Malika Miyawaki swept the girls U14 singles and doubles (Conatsu Kaga) crowns in the regional tournament, while Schorr also went 2-for-2 in the boys division, partnering with Tony Kim in the doubles. Schorr also topped the Pacific Oceania U14 Circuit rankings, while Miyawaki finished second.

Besides the four titles, the CNMI gained eight semis berths and 14 of its players (plus three more early qualifiers) earned slots on the North Pacific Team that competed in the POJC.

With the Commonwealth's strong showing in the NPQ and POJC, several of its players were given slots on the Pacific Oceania Touring Team that will be competing in Australia and New Zealand

Sapong leads medal haul in Pohnpei

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The CNMI athletics team members are joined by Northern Marianas Athletics president Ray Tebuteb, fifth from left front row, for a group photo before they leave for Pohnpei to compete in the 2016 Micronesian Athletics Championships.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Zarinae Sapong got a gold medal instead of her high school diploma last June 2 when she topped the 100m run in the 2016 Micronesian Athletics Championships.

Sapong, who missed her graduation rites at Marianas High School as she had to fly to Pohnpei to suit up for the CNMI Team in the MAC, went on to win one more gold medal, one silver, and two bronzes en route to bringing home the Outstanding Female Athlete award in the regional competition.

The sprinter also ruled the 200m run (27.87 seconds), was runner-up in the 400m (1:08.80), and helped the CNMI finish third in the 4x100m and 4x400m relay races.

Sapong and her teammates combined for the Commonwealth's seven gold, four silver, and three bronze-medal haul. Jerald Castillo and Chloe Salvosa gave the CNMI two gold medals each, Nick Gross had one, while Bernadette Horey and Conatsu Kaga earned one and two silvers, respectively. Salvosa, Horey, Sapong, and Pinyarat Shankweiller teamed up in the Commonwealth's bronze medal finishes in the 4x400m and 4x100m relays.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The CNMI All-Stars and their coaches and manager flash the No. 1 sign after ruling the Inaugural Micronesian Baseball Classic last July at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield. The CNMI edged Guam in the finals, 15-14.

MICRONESIAN BASEBALL CLASSIC WIN IS TOP SPORTS STORY

CNMI All-Stars shine

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

It was yet another memorable year for sports in the CNMI. With its yearlong sunny weather, the Commonwealth hosts a bevy of sports that both residents and off-island guests enjoy—making it difficult to decide the sports story of the year.

For 2016, the *Saipan Tribune* turns to America's favorite pastime as No. 1, specifically the CNMI All-Stars comeback win in the championship game of the Inaugural Micronesian Baseball Classic.

The CNMI All-Stars turned an impending loss to an epic win against long-time rival Guam to rule the first-ever Micronesian Baseball Classic.

In that sweltering July summer heat, Guam seemed poised to steal the thunder from the host in front of the one-sided crowd at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield as the visiting team once led by 11 runs in the finale, 13-2, and was one out away from completing the upset when the CNMI pulled off the mother of all comebacks en route to a thrilling 15-14 victory in extra innings.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Ben Jones, right, exchanges high-five with Brian Camacho, left, and manager Henry Lizama after beating Guam, 15-14, in the finals of the Inaugural Micronesian Baseball Classic at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield.

Catcher Verlance Secharmidal and centerfielder Juan Iguel teamed up in the championship-winning run at the bottom of the 10th inning. Secharmidal, with three balls, two strikes, and two outs, made contact with the ball that headed up to first base. Guam's Mike Peredo then leapt for a catch and had a hand on the ball, but eventually lost it, giving Iguel enough time to sprint from second to home to end the more than three-hour title game.

The come-from-behind victory over Guam capped the CNMI All-Stars' perfect run in the four-nation tournament. The Henry Lizama-managed squad swept the round-robin preliminary after beating Palau, Kosrae, and Guam. The selection then faced Guam anew in the semis and won, 15-5, to book the first finals berth. Guam went on to arrange its third duel against the CNMI All-Stars after topping Palau in the battle for the last finals seat.

The visiting team's strong start in the winner-take-all title match caught the CNMI All-Stars flatfooted before an over-the-fence solo homer from Brian Camacho at the bottom of the ninth inning sparked the eventual winners' rally. Camacho was the leadoff batter in the pivotal inning, which started with the CNMI All-Stars behind, 9-14. Brothers Juan, Lamarc, and Jesus Iguel, John Tudela, and Ben Jones then followed Camacho's lead to force the standoff at the end of regulation and the top of the extra inning.

Credit also Peter Lieto for the comeback win as his steady pitching in the homestretch helped the team's cause. He allowed only three hits and one earned run, while walking only two in 7.3 innings pitched and striking four.